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BESIDE GALILEE



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THISTLEDOWN AND THUNDER  
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A JEWISH SHEPHERD

# BESIDE GALILEE

*A Diary in Palestine*

HECTOR BOLITHO

*Any nation that potters with any glory of its past, as a thing dead and done for, is to that extent renegade.*

SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH

*London*

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To ROSALIND

because of her courage and her kindness,

WITH MY LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP.

JAQUES : Rosalind is your love's name ?

ORLANDO : Yes, just.

. . . .

JAQUES : What stature is she of ?

ORLANDO : Just as high as my heart.

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The author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Jewish National Fund for permission to reproduce all the illustrations in this book other than the two photographs of Petra.

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## INTRODUCTION

FOR the most part, this book is the unpolished diary of a Gentile, struggling against his inherited dislike of the Jews, while travelling amongst them in Palestine. The dislike goes back into the dim, unreasonable decisions of childhood. Deeper perhaps, into inheritance.

After seeing almost every corner of the little country, bustling in the Zionist settlements and languishing in the villages of the Arabs, I returned, again and again, to the peace of a garden on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. There were no strangers in the little house where I stayed. There were no sounds but the sweet monotony of the reed flutes of the goatherds playing in the fields beyond the garden, and, in the night-time, the crying of the jackals in the hills towards Nazareth.

Here I played, day after day. Behind me was a bank of oleanders, becoming more and more heavy with colour and scent, as March moved on towards luxurious April. Before me was the shining water, pierced, now and then, by the busy kingfishers. They would emerge first from the bank of eucalyptus—then, with a flutter of concern and menace, they would dart down to the oily surface of Galilee and disappear. Beyond the water were the golden mountains of the East. It was to this garden that I returned from my adventures in the outlying

## INTRODUCTION

valleys of Palestine. It was here that I wrote the greater part of my book.

There is a whirlblast of changes in Palestine. It is stronger than the tempestuous zeal of the Zionists or the subtle lethargy of the Arabs; stronger than any anger or political stratagem created between them and Palestine. It is a whirlblast in which all the human race will eventually be involved. It tears the earth of Palestine and shakes its monuments. The Moslems are suspecting the fallibility of the laws imposed upon them by their elders, and the bravest of their women have already walked in the streets unveiled. The Jews are cutting off their curls and they are running from their synagogues to the fields. Their once pallid faces are browning in the sun. The young Briton is turning away from the Christian relics in Jerusalem, terrified by the doubts which are growing up within him. These young Moslems, Jews, and Christians are bound together by one common anxiety and despair. They are more brothers than they know, for they are all tearing away the trinkets of orthodox religion with which the first, true images have been covered, and they are demanding a new and alarming freedom. They are trying to rediscover the truths which were, before creeds began. "The truth hath made you free," cries St. Paul, but they answer back, with Pontius Pilate, "What is truth?"

Their perplexity is increased by the destruction of so many of the legends with which their childhood

## INTRODUCTION

religion was confused. Archæologists have already destroyed the legend of the fallen walls of Jericho. We are told that the walls of the city beside the Dead Sea were destroyed in an earthquake. We are told that it was a tremor of the earth, and not God's hand which swept Sodom and Gomorrah into the bed of the Dead Sea. Thus it was easy to create miracles for the credulous people.

The rational young of to-day are seeing the destruction of the paraphernalia of history, and it is not easy for them to find the peace of mind which they desire, with so many changes pressing in about them. The old, who watch these changes so anxiously, need not despair. The rabbis look up from their books and tremble because a young Jewish girl and boy tramp off to sleep among the hills together, alone and unrestrained. The old rabbi does not know that they will feel the hand of God upon them more than when they were divided within the musty synagogue, where their prayers were riddled with dark and shrunken desires. A young Moslem woman receives her English guests in Tul-Karm without her veil. The sheik has heard of her sin and he is groaning in his mosque. But the woman needs no shred of black silk to guard her virginity now. She is flourishing in the new virtue of *courage*, instead of withering in the old virtue of *fear*. The young Christian boy is walking among the tombs of Jerusalem, resenting the two pallid clergymen who are photographing the sacred olive-trees in the

## INTRODUCTION

garden of Gethsemane. He is shocked and disturbed. When the guides show him the imprint Jesus made with His foot in the rock, he is sick with doubt and loneliness. In the evening, when Jerusalem lies, golden and lovely, on the brink of sleep, you will find this young Briton walking alone among the olive-trees upon a far hill. The tombs are no longer even a focus for his fugitive devotions. He hurries away from every monument and stone and, smelling the peach-trees and the rosemary—watching the moonlight glowing in the olive-trees, he lies upon the earth and asks for some kind of stillness within himself. These are the changes which are rending the Holy Land in pieces. How shy one feels, therefore, to come to decisions about smaller issues of Government, issues which are as ineffectual as stubble in an earthquake, before these deeper currents of change which are being born in Palestine. How shy, when the changes press in upon oneself with pain and excitement !

HECTOR BOLITHO.

SEA OF GALILEE,  
*April*, 1933.

I

- APPROACHING PALESTINE

*March*

WE slunk across the canal at Kantara in the dark. On the Egyptian side, life had seemed to be confident and easy. I had hated Cairo, the leering dragomen under the terrace of Shepherds', offering their monstrous entertainments. And the beggars, with little birds in their pockets. We crossed on the ferry, hot, pressed close together, Arabs and Jews and black Soudanese and a handful of laughing British soldiers. We found the farther shore of the canal strangely alive. It occurred to me then, as we crossed from one dark shore to the other, that I was soon to come to the country of the Zionists, passionate and fanatical. I suddenly shivered in a physical sensation of anti-Semitism, but I forced the feeling away from me with anger and disgust.

Up to six months ago, this instinct was so strong in me that, except for a brief period in my adolescence, I have never known a Jew intimately in my life. Intelligent Jews who have studied the history of their own inherited defences against Christians will say that the split between us began two thousand years ago, when the orthodox believers refused to allow St. Peter to bring the Nazarenes to the communal table, because they were not *kosher*. But the split is older. Even in the beginning, we are told, "Egypt



was glad when they departed, for the fear of them fell upon them."

To say that one has a prejudice against the Jews is a confession of which one should be ashamed. Prejudices are a paltry affectation. But when one knows that this antipathy grows out of an *instinct*, one is frightened, because it seems then to be stronger than oneself or any intellectual effort one can make towards a change.

When I was a child, in New Zealand, our garden ran down into a narrow valley. There, with a thick hedge to mark the boundary-line, it touched the luxurious park of a Jewish merchant. My mother and father were comparatively poor and our garden was big, so it was always tumbledown from neglect : a beautiful but untidy affair of arum lilies and vines and honeysuckle. The one man who came to help us in the garden was an old drunkard with a Crimean medal bobbing about upon his unworthy breast. We never found it in our hearts to send him away, but we regretted his wages when we saw him, drowsy and maudlin, over his spade. Packet was his name. He must be as dead as a doornail now. We used to see him put down his spade and disappear among the arum lilies which grew up the valley. We always believed that he sipped rum from a bottle which he kept hidden among the roots of the lilies.

Sometimes he told us stories of the great world beyond our garden. He had seen the soldiers throw their shakos into the air for Queen Victoria at Aldershot. He had seen the leaning tower of Pisa

and he had helped to load cargoes in the Congo Basin. He had nothing but contempt for our poor tatterdemalion of a garden. But his eyes opened wide with hatred if ever we spoke of the Jew on the other side of the garden. "If you dropped dead on the other side of the hedge," he said, "that Jew would have the gold out of your teeth before you were cold."

We were envious of the Jew's lilac, his lawns and his great oak. But not of his ornamental terrace. "The word *ornamental* was made for men like that," my grandmother once said to us. As children, we watched the budding trees, the sheen on his grass, with envy. But we never envied the man himself. He was known to us as "The Jew," although he was rich and famous and honoured by his King. We were afraid of him, but we were not envious. We *knew*, in our ignorance, that all Jews were Shylocks, whether they wandered in the shadows of Venice in gabardine, or through a colonial garden in Scottish tweeds. The wicked intolerance and patronage of which we were capable, standing in our tangled garden, was devilish. We suspected the motives behind his charity and scorned his kind approach. We would watch him, fear and derision poisoning our eyes and our hearts.

This feeling never faded in me. Travelling in Africa, Canada and Australia, and in the countries of the old world, I saw the Jews as people belonging to another race. I avoided them without experience or reason for my miserable prejudices. I am ashamed

of the depth of this prejudice : of the many times when it influenced my actions and my choice of friends. Up to the time of my travelling to Palestine, my intellectual forces were not great enough to overcome my instincts. But when I knew that I was coming here, in the days when I was dreaming, listlessly, upon the shore near to Palermo, or watching the blue tide from the sweet smelling slopes of Taormina, I examined this instinct within myself with suspicion. From this examination I have come to enjoy an exciting conflict between my instincts and my mind.

*Interlude*

I came to Palestine by way of Italy and Sicily. I went through a new school of development and education during the weeks of my slow and beautiful journey, before I arrived upon the shores of Palestine.

My Victorian studies had pinned my interests to Germany for many years and I had felt no great love or interest for the people of the South. Except for one brief, dark hour, when I paused there for a meal, I had never been in Rome before. For the first time during this journey to Palestine, I stood beneath the roof of the Sistine Chapel and saw the two hands, the one of God, full of knowledge and strength, the other, *human* hand, beautiful and dependent, extended towards it. At last, after many years of continuous writing, I was able to enjoy history and beauty without relating them to my work :

without looking upon them as prospective material for a book. When I went south, I walked through the bronze room in Naples. I gathered twenty-four different wild flowers from among the cracked stones of the Greek Theatre in Syracuse. I saw the clean and shining morning awaken on Etna, as I walked down the hill from Lionel's room, where we had lain, sprawled upon the floor, drinking cognac and talking about heaven knows what, until it was daylight.

I was guided through Italy by a friend who has known Rome and Naples since his childhood. As a youngster, he played among the flower-sellers upon the steps of the Piazza di Spagna. His grandfather's Palazzo was at the top of the steps, and therein were gathered great pictures and great people. D'Annunzio and Marconi were their friends : Duse and Siegfried Wagner were their guests. He knew Rome so well that he could take me to the museums and avoid all that did not matter. Thus my body and my brain were saved.

With him I studied the life of Michael Angelo, which I had not read since I was a raw boy, lying upon a hill in New Zealand. From the example of the Florentine, I took the refreshing realisation that great art grows out of normality : of men who build bridges and dig wells and fight for the peace in which they might write an essay or paint a picture. The meretricious cleverness and the intellectual laziness of my generation stabbed me then. My horizon grew each day I was in Rome.

One afternoon I went out to see Michael Angelo's "Moses." The great head, the face of a man in whom physical strength and courage served a great mind : in whom a great mind served a great and fearful spirit. And, with these, the eyes of a man who had seen God.

I returned to my room and contemplated my own weakness, my selfish introspection, my own lack of courage to live. I tried to smell this courage with which the Romans had lived, as one tries to smell the earth to take its vigour into oneself. Or as one smells the sea, to revivify and strengthen one's body. My body grew, and my moral courage was strengthened, as I contemplated the stones of Rome, whether they were the memorials of a pagan, indulging his senses upon Hadrian's terrace, or of a painter, indulging his spirit in the Renaissance.

In this withered day, men with courage are so rare that I cannot call more than one or two to mind. The men of pagan Rome would have gone into the hills to catch eagles with their bare hands. To-day, the little Englander fulfils his destiny by feeding tomtits upon his Sussex lawn. The Romans filled Hadrian's villa with life : they moved along the marble floors, with the vicious beauty of flames. When they loved, they were like fire. When they hated, they were terrible as a sword. When they sinned, they sinned with courage. When they were good men, they were like mountains.

This puny age to which we belong has no such courage, unless it is in the strange new power in the

very young, which we discern and barely understand. Those of us who are past thirty are ashamed of our emotions. When we hate, we curb our anger with good manners. When we sin, we are mean in the performance of our sin. We have dressed even poor Jezebel in the flannelette of suburban giganity. When we are good, we are also niggardly and critical. When we think of God's hand, we see it closed in anger. Whereas He has told us Himself that it is for ever open, lined with patience and charity. We are self-righteous. When we criticise our neighbour, we frighten him so that he is obliged to be deceitful. We have made ourselves judges of our fellows, and in this we have usurped the last and terrible right of God.

We are stifled, too, by our inheritance of superstition and prejudice, and, whether we are Christians, Moslems, or Jews, the initial inspiration of our religion never intended that this should be so.

"What is there in Christianity, after all?" asks the vigorous undergraduate at Cambridge. "If I face God, I don't want to do it through an agent in Rome or in any other place."

"Why should I weep against the Wailing Wall?" asks the young Jew.

"Why should I wear a veil?" asks the Moslem girl.

They are revolting against the superstructure of humbug which time has built over simple faith, obliterating the first passion which inspired it.

The young are trying to escape from the great

humbug of history. "Any nation that potters with any glory of its past, as a thing dead and done for, is to that extent renegade."

When I had been in Rome for three days, I was taken to meet Signor Mussolini at the Palazzo Venezia. After passing through a succession of beautiful rooms, I found myself alone with il Duce in his vast chamber. There was no furniture on all the great expanse of shining, mosaic floor but his own desk and a map stand. I found, when I arrived beside the map stand, that the atlas was open at New Zealand, my birthplace.

I had to make a journey across the interminable mosaic, to find il Duce sitting behind his desk. I have met clever men and good men, but I think that Mussolini gave me my first sensation of having met a great man. He transcended such words as *personality*, *force*, and *charm*. He was a little frightening at first. His eyes make any meanness in one wither up. I think a liar would feel sick in his belly if Mussolini looked at him for very long. The examination of his eyes is at first cold and ruthless. Like Cuesta, he "looked into the last little place of you, where you keep your courage." One feels that he would have Vesuvius removed if it stood in his way.

My fear soon passed, for his big, severe face softened into a smile. At one moment in the conversation he moved his head and looked no more than fifteen years of age. His eyes laughed then.

We talked of many things. One remark shines out of my recollection of the conversation. "We

must use history in relation to the future and not merely in relation to the past," he said.

I tried, during the days that followed, crossing the Mediterranean and meandering through Sicily, to draw the fullest meaning out of what he said. I realised that he asked for the death of old superstitions and escape from the clutter of old prejudices.

With this thought, I crossed the canal towards Palestine and made my first effort to understand the Jews, in what they describe as their "own country."

### *Rain over Galilee*

We passed through Nazareth about ten o'clock in the morning. An enormous new convent, the gift of America, sprawled across the hill above the town. A veritable warehouse of religion. Nazareth was saved from extreme ugliness by the soft darkness of the cypresses. We crossed the mountains towards Tiberias, colour of dusty gold, colour of camels, and then we came to the last mountain above the lake. A thousand cranes flew across the silver-blue sky. The driver, a good-looking, soft-voiced Jew from Russia, lifted his brown hand from the wheel and swept it in a great arc over his head. "They are flying from the Soudan to the Russian Steppes," he said. "The same time every year they pass like this, low over the lake."

We descended towards the water. Our ears crackled, for we passed down and down, until we were six hundred feet below sea-level. The Sea of



Galilee was oily blue : burning gold where the sunlight touched it. The surrounding hills were pink and gold and green. I have never seen a landscape of such unbelievable colours.

The driver lifted his hand again. It pointed out across the water. "There," he said, directing us to the opposite shore, "the Gadarene swine rushed down to the sea." We looked across at the calm, golden cliff, and then our eyes followed his hand. It moved slowly around to the left and paused over a nearer place where the high, militant hills ran down to a green slope, touching the water. "There," he said, "is Capernaum." He moved his hand a little more. "There the five thousand were fed with the loaves and fishes."

We came at last to the edge of the water. The Sea of Galilee lapped the land, leaving a strip of white foam, laced in and out among the pebbles. An arrogant camel walked past, with blue and scarlet tassels slapping his belly. Behind him was a drowsy Bedouin upon a donkey. He nodded in half sleep, drunk with heat. We turned back then into the muddled ugliness of the main street of Tiberias.

A sharp English voice cracked the silence on my left. I turned and saw the complete English traveller, in her dust coat. Her neck was scraggy, like the neck of a featherless turkey, and her nose was still blue from the ruthless cold of the English mornings. She held a big leather hand bag against her belly.

“ You know, it *is* the land of miracles,” she said. “ The man in the hotel says that there is a shortage of labour here and that they want thousands more Jews to work on the farms.” The sharp voice rose higher. “ Now, that *is* a miracle, isn’t it ? ”

We moved away along the shore and left her to her friends, delighted, she said, because she had just discovered that the distance from Tiberias to Jerusalem was the same as the distance from London to Droitwich.

“ But, of course, they won’t be like English roads, will they ? ” I could just hear her last words in the distance. “ You know, it is very beautiful, but I’d just as soon be walking down a muddy English lane in my Burberry. After all,” (and then she said it), “ there’s no place like England.”

I sat down on the pebbles and talked to a Jew who has been in Palestine for twenty-six years. He came from a dismal little village on the Russian border. His face was marked with the deep lines of character you find in a walnut.

“ You have come to a new Palestine,” he said. “ We have done something now. But it was not so in the beginning. Have you been to Hedera ? ” he asked.

I had seen the settlement through the milky-silver light of my first morning in Palestine, when I was crossing the coastal plain south of Haifa.

“ In fifty-two years,” said my friend, “ four generations of Jewish immigrants from Russia have died there. Almost seven hundred and fifty of

them, generation after generation, each one burying the last. But they persisted, with malaria dragging them down into the terrible swamp. No Bedouin would ever live there. The centre of death, the Arabs called it, and they always rode away on their camels. It is only now, after fifty years and seven hundred and fifty of them dead . . . it is only now that the last generation has been able to make it prosper. There are eleven hundred Russian and Polish Jews there now, with great eucalyptus-trees sheltering their houses, and their crops smiling and good."

I asked him then about commerce, because, when you are with the Jews, you are hustled and moved so that you do not pause for a moment to look at anything so unimportant as a temple or a tomb.

His eyes sparkled at my question. I had touched his Jewish heart. "Ah, business! It is very good now. The year 1931 was the worst in Palestine for twenty-five years. Then came the world crisis. The rich Jews in America and other countries no longer invested their money in Palestine, and we had the added depression of an orange crop not as good as usual. One gloom after another descended upon us. Political instability, and the memory of the riots of 1929, and then Lord Passfield's wicked White Paper, breaking the hopes of the country."

"And what of this year?" I asked

The walnut face changed. The lines became the lines of a smile. "We have begun wonderfully. I will tell you the story of one big trading concern

which opened business here in Palestine less than two years ago. They lost fifteen thousand pounds in the first year. This was inevitable. They were opening up branches in Palestine, Trans-Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Cyprus, and Southern Turkey. They opened fourteen offices, dealing with ten currencies, six different languages, and six different codes of law. It was a miracle of speedy organisation.

“In their first year the sales turnover was one hundred and seventy thousand pounds. This represents none but British goods, introduced into new markets. Now the second year of their trading has begun. Already they have turned from loss to profit and the half-yearly balance-sheet shows a profit of five thousand pounds. The monthly sales have gone up from fourteen thousand to twenty-two thousand pounds and the sales turnover for the first half of the second year is one hundred and thirty thousand pounds. Tell that to your pessimistic English merchants.”

So I am setting the remarkable figures down as an aspirin for sad London business men.

“But we want rain,” he said, lifting his wide hands from the pebbles, up towards the sky. “The harvests are thirsty.”

My Jewish friend went away and I walked back to the hotel. They had given me a sitting-room with a balcony. From this I could see the town, a conglomeration of roofs soothed by the motherly curve of the mosque. A conglomeration spreading over the lowland, touching the water upon one side

and straggling up the hills towards Nazareth, on the other.

In a second, the conjurer whisked his golden handkerchief aside. The sun put on a miserable, grey mask and every vestige of light and colour was withdrawn from Tiberias. The gold and the green faded from the slopes of the opposite shore. The shadows of the first little clouds ran down the cliffs, like the ghosts of the Gadarene swine. Dark, leaden clouds came up from the Jordan valley. They came, lower and lower, pressing upon the town to suffocating nearness. One, shaped like a vast, winged Pegasus, rode forward on the wind, alone.

There was a curious bustle in the town. An hour before, all the houses had been radiant with light. Now they were dark as lead. The Arabs ran out of the mosque, scuttling like agitated hens. Earlier in the day they had come in from their farms to pray for the rain clouds. I could hear them crying excitedly as they ran in and out among the lead houses, "It rains ! It rains !"

The Jews came out from the synagogue. But they did not run. They, too, had been praying for rain. Their bloodless lips parted, and they too looked up to the sky, the black ringlets of oily hair falling back from their olive faces. "It rains ! It rains !" they said.

The English trader in the hotel, drinking a *gimlet* and talking of a dim campaign near to an Indian hill station, paused to search among the

weather reports in his newspaper. "It seems to be raining at last," he said.

The great cloud burst over Galilee. The rain fell upon the water and upon the town and upon the land. The marigolds on my balcony were beaten flat upon the table. Rain and heavier rain. The lead-coloured houses were washed until they shone. The dome of the mosque, which had burned with light an hour before, was now shining and wet and dark.

Out of the grey sky came a flying boat, grey, enormous and punctual : nearer and nearer. It brought mails and passengers from England, by way of Athens. Its grey wings cut the lower clouds and then it settled upon the lake. All night long it rested upon the black water, a darker shadow in the shadows, a fabulous monster, with the rain beating down upon its wings.

The thin, wiry Arabs came out of their houses and watched the black outline. Two red lights moved in the darkness and they gave the flying boat two atrocious, moving eyes. The gutters of Tiberias were running with water ; the boughs of the eucalyptus-trees hung lower and lower, with their load of rain. The red petals of the wild anemones had long ago been broken and beaten into the mud. Still the Arabs crouched into the corners. They all came out of the coffee-shop, where two painted queans had been dancing a sort of fandango. They watched the English monster which had settled upon the water : the water upon

which Jesus walked, the water beside which Mary Magdalene was born, the water which runs into the turbulent Jordan. The flying boat was in some way wrapped up with the answer to their prayer . . . a miracle, coming out of the wonderful West, bringing letters and people and newspapers, but also bringing heavy rain, to revive the thirsty Jordan valley and to assure them bread for the vindictive winter.

*Coffee without Politics*

All day I have listened to Jewish complaints about the British administration in Palestine. We are obviously very wicked : less than the angels. And why is it that people judge us alone by this immaculate standard ? Foreigners are always disgruntled if our behaviour and ethics and morals are not divine.

Turning from this dismal recital of England's blunders, I went in the evening to drink coffee with an Arab. He was too charming a host or too clever a diplomat to say anything unkind about us. We sat in his house, a cool house, with white arches for doors, and thick, white walls. My Arab friend was decadent, well bred and gentle. His voice was deep and slow. His fine olive hands moved among the coffee-cups or they tore the tissue paper in a box, to reveal a new layer of sugared figs and citrons. When this was done, he rested his hands upon his knees, or he played with the fringe of his headdress. We talked about Arab architecture in Spain and of the mosaics in Palermo. I had an inkling then that



A FLYING BOAT ON LAKE TIBERIAS





his morals were atrocious. But his manners were of exquisite beauty. In the end, I was able to bring his thoughts and his tongue around to the vexing question of the settlement of the Jews in Palestine. He smiled, leaned forward to pour out another cup of coffee, and then he said, "Do not let us talk of politics. I think that England was too generous at the end of the war. She wished to be gracious and kind to everybody. So she promised the Arabs that they should prosper upon their land. She made also a promise to the Jews : that they should come back here, under the protection of your Mr. Balfour's declaration. They are two promises possible in the heart of a kind country. But they are two promises it is impossible to keep, because, as we say when we are alone together, the Arabs do not like the smell of the Jews. We can never live in peace with them. They are materialists. We are not. That is all. I think it is unfortunate that, in the kindness of her heart, England made these two promises, which she cannot keep."

So we talked of other things. I dug my teeth into a new sugared fig and we talked again of the dim gold arches of the mosaics in Mon Reale.

## IN THE MORNING, BESIDE GALILEE

*March*

EVERYBODY outside this garden seems to be angry. I stand alone, trying to keep my balance while a cataract of publicists and pamphlets whirls at my feet. But yesterday was fine fun. I escaped and I was here in the garden alone, all day. The complaints and the jealousies were all safely estranged from me, on the other side of the cypresses and the orange-grove. The garden, with its banks of magenta stocks and the taller, pink oleanders, runs down to the shores of the lake. Here I sat all day, watching the changing lights on the shore of Trans-Jordan, and the cumbersome, dusty camels coming along the road from Tiberias. But they too were far away from me.

The oleander bushes stretch right across the plantation, some with rosettes of white bloom, some with pink. In the evening, when they are satiated with the heat which has poured into them all day, their smell is sweet and pungent.

I remember once, lying upon the old wall of Rothenburg upon such a warm day as this, looking at the tubs of oleanders outside the stone cottages. I had gone there from the pandemonium of Stuttgart, for the luxury of being alone. Rothenburg, in the season when the tubs of gay oleanders are

standing outside the houses, can be the most calm, the least personal of all German towns. There, one is more alone. I used to lie on the wall, stretched out and lazy, looking down into the valley and enjoying my loneliness. Every association of my life, every voice, muted and distant. Every body and every dissension less real for the distance between us.

This sense of being withdrawn from life came again to me yesterday, in the garden. Such days of silence come less and less to one, because the crazy, unbalanced years demand more attention. Perhaps in a train, or in a room of silly people, one can mentally withdraw and enjoy the recollection of such days squandered in idleness. A beautiful extravagance of time ; days of languishing upon a New Zealand beach, watching the fishing-boats come up from the gulf, or meandering through the antipodean forest, gathering kidney ferns or kingfishers' feathers, caught in the strands of spider-webs. Such laziness is a luxury now. But perhaps it is because we are no longer brave enough to take time and events and *force* them into obedience. It would be easy to escape : to clamber over the cliffs of Cornwall in the spring and see the first daffodils enlivening the lowland near Gulval, or to squat upon the shore at Rye and try again to find the old fisherman with the gold earring who spoke to me there one day, long, long ago. But the day of escape never comes. It is one with the book I have always been going to read, or the friend I am always

going to see again. The day never comes, and I find myself growing older. Soon the energy will fail and I shall wither into the sleepiness and ignominy of age. Then I shall never be still, except that my feet and my mind will sleep. I shall move withered, restless hands that have forgotten how to play. And I shall struggle with an imagination I have allowed to die and find my thoughts no solace to me. Being quiet will be full of dangers and distresses, and I shall topple over, like a coward, into death.

Yesterday was so complete and so quiet that I am afraid to allow it to go away into dimness. I awoke about five o'clock. The morning air was sharp as a blade and the garden was dim, expecting the light and the warmth of the sun, for it had not yet risen.

There was not another soul in the world. I took off my pyjamas and ran down to the water. The first flying beasties were trying their wings, venturing no more than a foot or two from the trees. You can walk far out in the Sea of Galilee and still the water does not rise above your arm-pits. I walked thus, out and out, over a smooth floor of sand. I walked so far that the house and the garden were a dim mirage behind me. My body was torn with the exciting pain of the cold, so that I had to beat the water with my hands, lest I was frozen. The world seemed to be holding its breath. Then the sun rose, quickly, as if it had been hurled up from the earth's edge. The water of Galilee juggled with a million silver discs, the hills laughed with light

and colour. I walked back to the shore, a mile perhaps, with the sunlight dancing around me, on my shoulders and in my hair. When I came to the beach again, the garden was awake. The bees were about their business, the white butterflies were wheeling over the carnations and the first lizard was out upon the stone wall, nodding his head.

The sun dried my body and then, with no more than a towel about my loins, I went to my breakfast, which was already waiting for me, beneath a big blue umbrella. There was orange-juice and toast and honey. The oranges come from the plantation beyond the garden. I could smell the blossoms of their progeny, a smell already warm and sweet from the sun. Now there were six grey lizards and one green one upon the garden wall. The big one, who had been up almost as early as I was, still nodded his head, like an old gentleman saying, "I told you so, I told you so." But when the boy came down the path with the letters, the lizard ceased to be an old gentleman saying, "I told you so," and he scampered off into a crack in the wall, like a two-year-old.

Every corner of the garden is crowded with flowers. They burst through the surface of the paths, pink and yellow ; clusters of strange, new blossoms I have never seen before. As I was spreading honey upon my toast, the gauze door opened and the servant came out with my letters.

Most of them were from England. I felt so remote from their news and their arguments, in the safety

of the garden, that they might have been somebody else's letters, come into my hands in error. My eyes strayed away from the pages, towards the water. I was ashamed of my detached coldness for I found myself not bothering to read them all through.

This set me thinking of how we deceive ourselves into imagining that other people are necessary to us. Cramped into London, with telephones and motor-cars and restaurants, our day becomes anxious and forlorn if we do not meet this one whom we love, or that one whom we need, to stimulate us. Our day is shorn of wit without this amusing fellow, and shorn of beauty unless we see that particular pair of hands, moving among the silver and glass of the lunch-table. But such anxieties fade when Italy and the Mediterranean are between us. The intensity of human relationships is greatly imagined : so many of them grow out of no more than the miserable fear of being alone.

Away from the pandemonium of a city, one is stronger in being alone. An old and rather fine independence which we thought of as lost, rises up vigorously and we are not bored by our own company. Introspection may be the opposing danger, but it can be avoided with physical exercise and work. It is comforting to feel that one is not really a complication of inhibitions and complexes after all : that full happiness can come from working, swimming, eating and the final joy of tired sleep.

Two nights ago I saw the flying boat descend upon the water again. Among the passengers was a

Dutch painter whom I met later, in the bar of the hotel, which is six or seven miles away from where I am living now. He was twenty-eight. He has been rich and successful and he was one of the handsomest creatures I have ever seen. We dined together on the balcony of the hotel. Neither of us knew the other's name. We talked for eight hours, heedless of time, talking with the excitement that can come only when two people are strangers, discovering each other through unselfconscious conversation. He told me his story. His personality, his gifts, and his beauty had made him live his life very early. He had been indulgent and he had been indulged. At twenty-eight he had, in a moment, come to the realisation that he had used his talents and his good looks for his own, and only his own, pleasure.

The horror of this came with a spiritual awakening. He fled from it all, and when I met him, he was on his way to a corner of Africa, to be alone. He had been given the courage to run away. When we went to our rooms, Tiberias was waking. We had talked until it was morning.

I thought of him many times when I returned to the garden and to the quiet house. Before he flew away in the morning, he had shown me his one possession, a crucifix, which he carried in his rucksack. On this day, while I was standing beside the water, stretching out my arms and feeling the pride of my independence, a thin, piping note came to me through the trees. At first, it was so faint that it was



drowned, every now and then, by the subdued symphony of bees and water and birds. It grew : it became sharp and near. It was the reed flute of a goatherd, bringing his beasts down to the fields. He was playing, as his interminable Bedouin ancestors had played, long before J  sus came to the lake from Nazareth. The sound of the flute drew me away from the narrow orbit of my thoughts.

A reed flute, playing on and on, from the very birth of this country, to the moment in which I was beside the water. The same notes, the same globules of silver, sometimes like drops of water, sometimes like laughter, sometimes leaping down and grunting with humour. One fine, exciting string of notes, stretching from infinity to me. The Temple is built in Jerusalem and still the goatherd plays on. Anger possesses the world. Hadrian impales a swine's head upon the gates of Jerusalem. God moves his hand and the pillars of Pompeii topple at His feet. New countries across the sea are violent with jealousies. North mutilates South. Attila stirs in the dark forests of Europe and comes out again to destroy. White women, in far-away, scented corners of the East, bare their breasts to the Moslem swords. And still the goatherd plays on, watching his beasts feeding in the fields beside Galilee.

The centuries tumble past. They are no more than a phantasmagoria to him. The Turks are forced out of Palestine and a light bursts upon the Jews of all the world. England, the feared and the

loved ; England, the great mother, will suckle the emaciated Semitic baby and feed it and nourish it and see it grow. Her strong arm will be held over it, when it dares to toddle in its first walk towards freedom.

Still the goatherd comes down from the hill, his bare brown legs threading their way between the high grass : his lithe body resting beneath the banana palms and the eucalyptus, when the hot noon comes. He brings the same reed flute and the same tune, rising and falling, laughing, tumbling notes, spilled along the road he walks, like prismic pieces of sunlight. His song goes on and on. It is a blessing upon the land for ever. While the rest of Palestine awakens to the sound of the new Zionist feet, the goatherd plays on. Jerusalem is troubled : the Moslem presses the Jewish girl back upon the very earth she calls Zion and rapes her. The air is hideous—the depths of human anger are terrible. The silent little Jew bares his teeth, like a fox. Human nature is exposed, at its ugly worst. Still the young goatherd comes down from the hill, a yellow daisy hanging limply from his hand. He lifts his flute and plays again.

The great Mother England seems to fail her adopted Hebrew child. No sooner has he learned to nuzzle his hungry mouth against her than she discovers another urchin upon her knee. It is an Arab, with sharp teeth, but with equal need and equal right to hold its place against her generous breast. She finds them such a quarrelling pair,

what with spitting and scratching, that she would relish being rid of both of them. She *could* throw them both to the floor with a sweep of her arm. But she shields them, and, when they bicker beyond all endurance, then she lowers a hand to separate them.

I do not know the right and the wrong of this. The goatherd knows. He has the great Stillness within himself. Each note he plays is a century, old and tired. He has the secret of it all imprisoned in his flute.

I walked back to the garden and picked a flower to put beside G.'s breakfast plate, for she had not yet appeared. I could just see her moving behind the gauze, like a beautiful, lemon-coloured moth. Then I went down to the eucalyptus-trees and lay upon the sand. All the morning I stayed there, listening, sometimes turning to watch the kingfishers flying over from the green, cool slope of Capernaum. They would pause in their flight, and, more like moths than birds, iridescent, fluttering against the blue sky, they would dart down, sharp and fleet as arrows, piercing the water and coming up again, with struggling fishes in their beaks. The fishes Peter caught. The fishes Jesus spread upon the stone, which you still may see, six or seven miles away, when He gathered the five thousand about Him and fed them. The goatherd played his flute long before then.

I listened, gathering the white pebbles into heaps and patterns. I came back again in the afternoon,

and, when the sun was setting, I rose and walked away from the garden, through the orange plantation and into the field. The goatherds were going home, so I had to pursue their music, running breast-high through the grass. I was afraid I should lose them, that their music might fade and die, over the crest of the hill. I came upon them just as they were guiding their goats through an opening in the fence. One was old and shrivelled, but his eyes were not tired. The skin near his eyes crinkled into a smile when I asked him to come back after dinner and play to me. His friend was young and sturdy, solemn and afraid.

When it was dark, they came back through the cypresses. A great, black silence had descended upon the garden, a silence split every now and then by the wailings of the jackals far away, or the flutter of the eucalyptus leaves, stirred by a breeze that came over from the mountains in the east. The oleanders and the stocks, the lake and the camel path down the hill, were all drowned in deep, blue-black night. The smell of the orange blossoms was almost sickening, warm, and sweet as saccharine.

I sat upon a step and, a few yards away, the goatherds sprawled upon the grass and played to me. Their goats were safe in the fold. They would stay and play for me until morning if I wished. I could see their white headdresses moving sometimes, when they put their flutes down upon the grass and sang to me.

The bubbles of sound came over the bed of stocks, mingling with their smell, sweetening the air so that I could not distinguish between the beauty I smelled and the beauty I heard. The voice of the flute was young. It danced and it laughed: it pranced for my delight. I fell to thinking of all the people I have known. I have a beloved and gentle friend in Cheshire who is so old that most of his friends are dead. He has a list of their names upon a card, and for each of them a flagstone in his garden path. He walks down the path every day and recalls each one of them, friend for stone, and stone for friend. I think that I have been fortunate in knowing mankind. I have few grudges and little bitterness. For every swindler, I have met a hundred honest men. And even the swindler had charm. For every evil man, I have met a hundred good men. And even the evil one had some wistful hunger for the talents he had thrown away.

The goatherds played on. Their tune was less dancing. It moved into the pace of a Bach fugue. It was a song without beginning or end, droning and eternal. The anger of the Zionists seemed to be very far away then. It could never penetrate into the immaculate peace of the goatherd's song. Men will go on being angry with each other for thousands of years. It has always been, and it will be. The solution of political differences and racial hatreds, the curing of these old cancers, is not to be done with a promise or with the dash of a pen.

The flutes changed their theme. They made grand

notes and grand phrases, shaking the garden from its torpor. It is only through the slow growth of human nature that the pain of misunderstanding will pass from the body of the world. The soft hand, staying the sword. I walked down to the edge of the lake and trailed my hands in the water. It was still warm from the sun. Then I went into the garden, so far that the flutes seemed to be a mile away. The shadows were fearful. But they faded and passed. Morning was already upon us.

When the light began to rise over the water, I sent the goatherds away. The garden was coming to life again. I could see the shapes of the trees against a wall of moonstone. The goatherds would not take any money from me, but, as they walked away, they picked two white roses out of the garden. The old man turned back then. I picked him another rose and pressed it into his hand. "I shall come every night and play for you," he said. I walked to the edge of the plantation with them and then I watched their white headdresses disappearing into the thicket. Very soon they were swallowed up. But I could hear their music, dancing on and on, changing to merriment because it was almost morning again. They had played to me all night. Far, far away I could hear them. The song of the goatherd, coming to me from the day before Jesus crossed the selfsame field :

*My ears are tired of the sounds of earth.  
May I now turn towards the sun  
And contemplate the pageant of the heavens.*

BESIDE GALILEE

*Just as lofty trees, in the autumn of their days,  
Cease to wear the green of spring, the colours of the  
earth,*

*And draw their richness from the sun :*

*The gold, the crimson, and the fire.*

*May I now, like these, O God,*

*Turn my face towards the light*

*And lose the earthly touch,*

*To wear the vestment of Thy Holy Grace.*

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III

HUMOUR IN PALESTINE

*March*

TO-DAY I lunched with a Jewish merchant and his friends. Feeling the pleasure and the responsibility of the occasion, I told what I hoped would be a new story, with that touch of vulgarity which sets a bachelor lunch-party off upon a happy track. All laughed but the Jew. His face remained rigid, his eyes unamused. He explained away my distress by telling me a story in return. He said :

“ An Englishman laughs at a joke three times : when he is told it, when he understands it, and when he repeats it. A Frenchman laughs twice : when he is told it and when he understands it. But he never remembers it to repeat it. A German laughs once : when he hears it. A Jew never laughs because he has already heard it.”

I suggested the addition of the American, who laughs once : half way through the story, when the teller pauses for breath.

*Both sides of the Question*

I sat with three Arab scholars last evening, two of them members of the Moslem Council. One of



them dominated the conversation. He was an Arab who had been at Cambridge, sharp-tongued, merciless in his anger against England, pouring facts and statistics upon me like hail. I am setting down what he said to me without comment. I asked him if he thought that Western civilisation would slowly exhaust Eastern civilisation, as represented by his own Arab people. He said : " No, because your Western civilisation is based on materialism. Our Eastern civilisation is based upon morality. Bolshevism is already breaking down your Western civilisation. We have already many of the finer ideas of Bolshevism in our Eastern civilisation. Our codes are based upon honour, while yours are based upon power."

I made no effort to interrupt him. He continued : " Mr. Lloyd George gave my country, Palestine, as a present to the Jews, over a cup of tea. Dr. Chaim Weizmann had done a great service for England in giving her a chemical secret from his laboratory : a secret which helped you to win the war. Mr. Lloyd George wished to pay and to honour Dr. Weizmann, so he paid him with the Arabs instead of with gold. Not only have we been forced off our land, but the law now prohibits Palestinian born Arabs from returning to this country from abroad. Many are left in Brazil, without nationality, although their families are still here, waiting for them. Your Government refuses to give them permission to return."

I interrupted him then and asked : " Do you mean

to say that the Arabs have not obtained even one benefit from the British Mandate? ”

“No, not one,” he answered. “We pay more taxes and we have less public security. We used to pay one hundred and eighty thousand pounds every year as taxes to Turkey. Now we pay two million five hundred thousand pounds for the privilege of the British Mandate and we get nothing for it. Under the Turkish rule, there were one thousand two hundred crimes every year. Now there are three thousand crimes a year in the Northern district alone—only half of Palestine.”

I suggested that perhaps the British police were more astute and that the higher figure might be explained by the difference between the Turkish and British conceptions of what was a criminal act.

“No,” he answered. “Crime has increased because of the increase of unemployment among the Arabs, brought on by the sale of our land to the Jews. The Jews now possess one third of the best land in Palestine. They influence our farming and our economics : soon they will influence our ideas. The British Government does everything in its power to help the Jews, but it does nothing to help us.”

I said then that it was curious that I had been told the very opposite, only the day before, by an equally angry Jew.

The Arabs smiled then, and one of them, a mild and soft-eyed old farmer, said : “I will tell you a story to illustrate our feelings about Turkish and British rule. A man had a friend named Omar.

They were good friends for a long time. But the man became tired of his friend, so he rose from his house and went out and slew him. Then he made a new friend, but he spent all the rest of his life lamenting Omar."

*Reformers*

When I see so many people up in arms against England, discontented with every law and every effort we make to help Palestine, I feel that a system of honours would help them to appreciate us. When a man is annoyed with the Crown and also clever enough to be a wily and powerful enemy of the Crown, then it is well to bestow honours upon him. When a man contemplates a glittering star upon his coat, he will be less conscious of the rancour in his heart. It is seldom that any man's convictions are as strong as his vanity. So I would take the most violent Jews and the most violent Arabs and I would bestow upon them the Order of the Olive Branch of Jerusalem. Better still, perhaps, if it were the Order of the Olive Branch of Downing Street. This should be big and sparkling and it should be worn upon all occasions. Almost every reformer deteriorates when he achieves office or honour. We can quell clever and dangerous men as well with Orders of the British Empire as we can with the law or with intimidation. A Socialist is a frustrated Tory : an insurgent is an autocrat out of power. Since he has been made a peer, Lord Snowden has made statements in the House of Lords which bring

blushes to the cheeks of his most Tory colleagues. An assassin is no more than a poor wretch who would like to be king. Invaders never smash the king's goblet, for it is part of their ambition to drink wine out of it themselves. When Cromwell saw the Stuart martyr well and truly buried, one of the first things he did was to establish himself in Windsor Castle. Men are all the same : only their state is different. When a man shows signs of becoming an intelligent enemy of the State, make a Knight of him. If this is not enough, make him into a Baronet. He will wilt in the end. With the benison of flattery and the trappings of honour, the most hostile Jews and Arabs could be made into a strong Conservative backbone for the country. When a man is the enemy of society, draw him into that society and he will become its truest friend.

### *Argument*

One realises how pathetic the Arabs are in seeking arguments against the British Mandate by reading the Arab newspapers. The ignorance of the leaders, whose trumpetings are listened to so solemnly by the mass of Arabs, is beyond belief. Unfortunately ignorance is not beyond being an influence upon the people. I take two sentences from an article in *Falastin*, the Arab national organ, of yesterday :

“ If a proof were needed that Palestine is being used as an auxiliary to deal with the problem of

unemployment in Great Britain, it is afforded by the statistics of police strength given to us by the Police Department. . . . In a total strength of one hundred and thirty two officers, there are fifty Britishers. . . .”

In the same hour, I talked to a Zionist official who said to me : “ Great Britain has antagonised the Jews of the world with her treatment of the Zionists in Palestine. You made a promise in the Balfour Declaration, and you have not kept it. England does not realise that the financial power of the Jews is so great that the fall of the pound could have been averted if you had not antagonised the Jewish bankers of the world by the way you have evaded your responsibilities in this country. Indeed, I have heard it said that the Jewish financiers deliberately forced the fall of the pound as a punishment for England’s disregard of the promises she made in the Balfour Declaration.”

How can one explain the English point of view to fanciful minds such as these ? “ These are the exceptional cases,” says the calm Zionist, to whom I turn for solace when I am bewildered. I told him that it was sad for Zionism that there were such “ exceptional ” zealots. Unfortunately, in Palestine or in any other country, the exceptional people seem to be the only ones who ever have enough energy to blow a trumpet. The calm majority never stir or speak until battle is at their door.

*Belladonna*

In the morning, twenty Arab leaders came to see us. I was the one Christian present without Jewish or Arab sympathies, so I was able to observe the scene with iced indifference. The Jews sat at one end of the room, the Arabs in a great circle in front of them. A circle of fine-looking Arabs, in flowing clothes and white headdresses. I sat upon a sofa, and, for the most part, we merely looked at each other, taking sugared fruits out of boxes, drinking Turkish coffee, and feeling rather self-conscious.

I am supposed to be a child of Western civilisation ; brisk, clean, and respectable. I am supposed to understand the colonising of Palestine, the bright bathrooms in which the poor Polish Jews are to find emancipation through hygiene, the clever irrigation systems and the efficiency which turns beautiful landscapes into profitable farms. Each day I have talked to clever men, efficient men, important men ; men who make schemes and who produce clever plans from their pockets. Schemes to save the world. Men who talk of so many acres at so many pounds ; of so many cases of oranges produced from so many acres. It is all a network of efficiency and action, when one talks to the Zionists. Commendable and impressive, but sometimes boring.

The truth is, I suppose, that I am not as brisk and clean and respectable as I seem. Or as I should be. Indeed, there have been times when I have suspected

myself of being thoroughly disreputable by instinct and respectable only through social accident. One of the men I liked most in my life had sold his grandmother's gold teeth and her piano, *on the day of her funeral*, to buy his passage to Canada. There is an immoral strain in me somewhere. I gravitated away from these earnest Zionists, towards the drowsy Moslems. It is my nature and my pleasure to do so. I like these less-efficient Arabs. Somebody has divided the Europeans into two groups—the northerners who wash and tell the truth, and the southerners who do not wash and who tell lies. Well, there are times when I love the unwashed liars. They do not care who bought or sold what. They do not know the price of anything : they know only the value of living. “The Arabs would steal your watch as soon as look at you,” whispered the Jew next to me. Maybe. I would sooner have my watch stolen by somebody I liked than have it left in my pocket by somebody I did not like.

Two of the Arabs smelled belladonna berries as they looked at us. I thought it a pretty conceit. Drowsy, rhythmic, gentle, and slow-moving, from the repose which is their birthright. They turned the yellow berries over and over in their fingers, passing them back and forth beneath their noses. One of them must have sensed my sympathy, for he rose, walked across the room, and gave me his belladonna. It was pungent and sweet-smelling. I realised then why he smelled it. It was an escape from the boredom of the occasion. So I smelled it,

and found pleasure in it, and I listened to an Arab speaking. His voice was low, coming from a distance, like the sound of water moving in a deep cave.

The Arabs wanted water, they said. Their village was near to the Jewish settlement. Artesian wells, irrigation pipes, and money made the Jewish settlement rich in water. The Jews had bathrooms : their orange-trees sprang up quickly from the moist earth. The Arab village had almost no water. The Arab leaned forward and painted the picture for us. His village was low-lying. A pipe could be laid so simply and so cheaply, and then both Arabs and Jews would have water. It seemed to me that the Arabs were trusting and ingenuous people to accept the tap end of the Jewish water-pipe. It showed a child-like lack of suspicion.

But the Jews did not see it this way. "If you give the Arabs one thing, they will ask for more," they said.

### *Easter Sunday*

It is pleasant to walk about the country, from the yellow fields near Capernaum, up the hill over which you go to Nazareth, or, along the banks of the Jordan. The story of Jesus is easily traced, from place to place. But, as He comes nearer to me as a man, so He fades into frightening dimness as a Divine figure. I cannot focus my feelings or my thoughts in these matters yet, but I turn again and again to the simple Bible stories of my childhood,



the bible readings at my Uncle's side, and wonder how much I am losing and how much I am gaining by coming thus perilously near to historical facts.

It was such a different religion that we learned, in the little galvanised iron Church which my Uncle had built for the farmers. I was sensitive and frightened as a child, through illness, and I was never happy in that stark, tin monstrosity, with its pitch-pine organ and its uncomfortable seats. There was a smear of Nonconformity over it all and this I hated . . . I never understood why until I sat in an English Cathedral. I knew then why the stripped, hygienic Methodism of my colonial childhood horrified me. The new colony was all very well for the strong and the brave, but there was a yellow streak in me somewhere—it was almost impossible for me to love the great New Zealand hills, the farmhouse and the hard cold mornings as much as I should.

My uncle was old and grey and bent, and, like his brothers, he had a biblical name. The three of them were John, Joseph and Matthew. In the early years they had regretted the stern courage of the ancestor who left the Cornish earth to tell the Maori people about the star over Bethlehem, and to teach them how to eat food from a table instead of from the earth, and of how to cover up their brown shame with petticoats from Manchester. But by when I was born, their bitterness had long been dead. Then it was a part of an old numbness, which had grown over them, making them stupid and quiet

and kind. While the hard cold life of the farm pressed in around them, my aunt and my uncle remained warm and English, in their spreading, weatherboard house. My aunt had her still-room and her needlework and her copy of *The Cornhill* coming every month, just as if the earth which surrounded her was the old, subdued earth of England.

It was strange for me to run out of the English house, which my uncle had made, and find the skulls and bones of Maoris down by the river, where they had feasted and fought in the jolly twenties. The water used to wash the banks away, so that I would find the skulls lying pell-mell in the sand, gleaming white in the sunshine.

Of course, I did not know then why it never satisfied me to run into the cool shadows beneath the wattle-trees, or to go down into the valley and pump water for the cattle, on a summer morning. The mornings were so hot that the iron pump burned my hand, so that I had to wrap sacking around the handle before I could hold it. Nor did I ever understand why I was not contented, nailing rabbit skins on to the wall of the barn, so that they would dry, or spreading plums on sheets of galvanised iron in the orchard, so that we should have a store of dried fruit all through the winter.

I used to be ashamed of the strange pain I suffered, with the hard, colonial energy pressing in around me. Sometimes there was a movement of sympathy between me and my aunt and it helped

me to understand that I was not alone in my fear—that she too was unable to become part of the colonising excitement, the building, the hammering, the change and the untiring progress. I remember a day when she cried, “ Oh, won’t they ever be still—won’t they *ever* be quiet for a second ? ”

I remember too a day when she was sitting on the verandah. She had been there all the morning, embroidering a new cover for a chair. She stood up and, leaning on the rail of the verandah, she looked down into the valley. Then she called the others out of the house. “ Oh, Joe—they’re building galvanised iron sheds. Look, three of them. They’re so ugly. And I’ve always loved that part there—it’s never changed since we came. They’ll spoil it all in the end. Oh, they’re cutting down the pohutukawas—their trunks are tumbling down the hill.”

She seemed to cry silently as she looked over the rose garden, down the slope, to a place where the prospectors were clearing the trees. The railway was coming, and in a year, we were promised a post office, so that we should not have to ride seven miles for the letters any more. Each night, before we went to bed at ten o’clock, my uncle took down the Bible and just as he placed it on the table, beneath the lamp, we all slid silently to the floor, kneeling against the chairs and waiting for his old, quiet voice to read to us. He read Job, more than any other. I thought of his voice so much this morning, when I leaned out of the window and looked over Galilee.

The things in the room where we sat at night are as clear to me now as when I used to watch them, during the prayers, drawing them with an imaginary pencil. There was a Spanish leather screen, with blue and red flowers against a dull gold background. I think I developed my first consciousness of colour from its blue and its red and its gold. And there was a fire-screen, which we never quite liked. But it was very useful, because my aunt could never bear the whole heat of the fire on her back when we sat around the table for whist. Of all the things in the room, there was one which made my heart beat and my prayers more excited, for it was a portrait of my English uncle.

All my cousins had been born in the colonies, and their faces were healthy and colonial and red. But the face of my English uncle was fine and gentle. "Very like Byron," people used to say. And then my aunt would add, "but very different in character."

The lips were heavy and sensitive and there was some fine lace at his throat. I could never make out the colour of his coat because it melted into the background of blue-brown. His hair was curly, and my aunt told me that he had the ears and hands of "a gentleman."

So it was for many years, while I knelt for my prayers at night, I would fix my eyes on him and imagine him in a great, dark, English room, with Spanish leather screens and tables so heavy that nobody could move them. And I used to pray,

with a pain which was almost terrible, that some day I would escape from the colony and walk into the old dining-room and find him sitting alone, at the end of the table. I would not feel conscious of my heavy colonial shoes, as I walked over the carpet to sit beside him and eat with him : to move my hands above the shining silver and see the noiseless servant moving behind him, with a name which my uncle would say with dear familiarity, because the man would be an old, old servant.

I used to press my elbows into the chair, and while my uncle's voice droned on :

*I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls.  
My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burnt with heat.  
My harp also is turned to mourning. . . .*

I watched the portrait in its maple frame. Every dream I made was centred about it. It seemed to be the doorway to every English thing for which I yearned.

Once, in the middle of the summer, when the paint on the weatherboards was burned into a powder by the heat, my uncle came out on the verandah and said, " Your uncle's been killed—riding—the one in the portrait you know." He said it coldly, as if it mattered very little this way or that. And he never knew that in that moment the big oak table was swept of its linen and its silver, and with them, England and everything soft and gentle in my life—the silent servant moving behind him, the Spanish

leather screens and the hope that I'd ever escape from the machines and the loud voices and the driving of the cows up the hill ; the hard, stiff box-hedge and the noise.

I went out into the fields and walked a long time, as far away from the milking sheds as I could go. I think I threw fir cones into the river—I can remember the flower farm which was on the other bank, burning with colour. It seemed that the quiet, English room was vanishing there, consumed by the blue flame of the irises. My uncle's gentle face and hands burned in the colonial heat and were swallowed into the hard, new earth, which he had never known.

And my older uncle's voice droned on—

*My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burnt with heat.*

*My harp also is turned to mourning. . . .*

*Easter Sunday, Later*

These were my thoughts and my recollections as I climbed the hill, away from Galilee, this morning. We came to Nazareth and the blessing of Easter Sunday seemed to be upon the fields and upon the little villages. There was no anger and there was no speed in the life of the land. We moved slowly and the air we breathed was softened by the sun and the smell of the fields. When we came to Nazareth, I wished to go into the Church. I write this story with mental pain, because I am torn

between my desire to tell the truth and, on the other side, my natural wish to hide an experience so personal and belonging to myself. The Church was dark and there was only an Arab verger or door-keeper, standing in the shadow. There was enough light for me to approach the Altar upon the main floor of the Church, but I wished to go to the Altar below. This was in a dark well, approached by shadowy steps. I asked the Arab to give me some light and then, with one globe shining over the Reredos, I descended the steps and stood in front of the little Altar. The silence and beauty of the lonely minutes gave me infinite pleasure. Until a curtain moved and a priest appeared beside the Altar. He summoned the Arab in a loud voice, reproved him for having turned on the light, switched it off while I was standing before the Altar, and left me in the dark, to turn from the Shrine and stumble up the steps again, into the light.

Some days ago I went to another Church where two priests showed me the shrines and relics. As I walked towards the door, I pressed the usual gift into the hand of one of them. He moved his hand back, after thanking me, and, behind my back, he opened his hand to show his fellow priest the size of my donation. I saw their smiles when I turned my head to say "Good-bye," a moment before they expected me.

Since the world is drained of pennies to keep the Shrines of Palestine alight and alive, I think it is well that people should examine the money-box

## *HUMOUR IN PALESTINE*

which is rattled in front of them, with infinite care, before they enrich and fatten such monsters as these. There is need for a great cleansing of some of the religious institutions of Palestine.



## A FARM BY GIDEON'S WELL

*April*

AT noon, I came to the Plain of Jezreel. We left the shores of Galilee early in the morning and, passing over the mountains, we came to the lowland : green stretches of meadow, with violent splashes of wild red anemones, near to the road. When we came to the plain, we turned to one side and approached the bordering hills. All over the plain were Zionist settlements, eager and ambitious : some of them flourishing. It was upon this plain, you will remember, that the Midianites and the Amalekites were gathered to make war against the children of Israel. It was at the foot of the hills which we approached that Gideon's voice was raised, calling upon God to help him. I walked upon the ground where the Lord appealed to Gideon : where He bade him divide his followers so that only the brave and the wary might fight with him against the Midianites.

At last we came to Gideon's spring, tucked in under the hill. Here it was that the Lord chose the three hundred fighters for Gideon's army. He told Gideon to bring his soldiers to the water of the spring, and, bidding them drink, He chose between the thoughtless ones who lowered their heads and lapped the water with their tongues, like dogs, and those who drank, lifting the water to their mouths in their

hands. These were the wary ones, who drank with their heads raised, looking to the right and the left the while. The careless ones, who gave no thought of the enemy, were abandoned.

It was about this spring, still trickling out between the wild flowers, that I found a settlement of young Jews, husbanding fifty acres of land. The grimness of their purpose was shown in the way that they had covered up the beautiful spring with harsh stonework and iron, to protect their settlement from the mosquitoes that used to breed there. The Jews were all young, both boys and girls, and they numbered thirty. Their ideals and their purpose are different in some ways from those that stir in other Zionist settlements. Some of them came out of Jerusalem : all were born in Palestine. They are living upon the land near where David lamented over Saul and Jonathan, cursing the earth upon which they were slain.

“Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings. . . .”

The land about Gideon's well was yellow with daisies and mimosa, as if the settlement were endowed with a cloth of gold. The day was warm, and the wild anemones burned in the dry grass. I passed among the houses of the settlement : the farmers were out in the fields, so the little cluster of houses was deserted. From the lowland, I climbed the slopes, the cursed slopes upon which Jonathan

was slain by the Philistines : where Saul fell upon his sword.

I climbed so far up the hill that I could look out over the plain. Everywhere were signs of the new Zionist energy. Wide plantations and fields, divided by new roads along which the rhythmic camels walked, with limp Arabs crouched upon their backs. I lay in the dry grass and thought upon the vexed problem of the return of the Jews. Here upon the farms I am happy with them. But a feeling of futility and wasted energy seems to press in upon me at times. True, there are pictures which delight one. There are no sallow little Jewish children in the settlement. They are laughing and fat. In one settlement, run upon mildly communistic lines, all the babies live in a separate house, away from their mothers and fathers. Here they are fed and trained to pattern. I walked through the nurseries a few days ago and saw twenty or thirty strong, sun-browned youngsters. I thought of the Jewish babies I have seen in the villages of Ober Hessen : where the miserable little cow dealers and merchants are still socially tortured and made into buffoons. It is not easy to believe that these Jews of Jezreel are of the same race. All vestiges of the old pallor has gone.

To-day, I lay back in the dry grass for almost an hour, thinking of these matters. Then I leaned upon my elbow and saw the settlement of younger Jews at my feet. They are brave to come like this to Gideon's spring, to the very earth which bears



AT ME'ER SHEFEAH, A CHILDREN'S VILLAGE IN GALILEE



David's curse. It is cursed still. There had been neither rain nor dew for many weeks, and, I was told, the young Jews were anxious for their harvest. The boys and girls in this settlement have been brave in planning their place in Zionism. Some were in the universities : all were destined for scholarship or offices. They have formed an order which is communal and peaceful, coloured with ideals of friendship and the simple duty of living together in peace. Thus armed with a purpose, they came to Gideon's spring and pitched their tents. It is in the hands of these, and such as these, that Zion will prosper.

I am suspicious of all the propagandists, and I feel that I shall shrivel before those who trumpet the cause of Zionism in cities and towns. Their purpose may be honest, but their trumpets are deafening. The greatest enemy of the Jewish farmer in Palestine is his own propagandist. The arguments and statistics heaped upon one in Jerusalem are of little use. To be told that two million trees have been planted is not so convincing as to come here and, sitting upon the hillside, see a group of twenty eucalyptus trees (the trees of the Jews, the Arabs call them), sheltering the houses of a colony. Here, upon the earth, is the one great argument in favour of the return of the Jews to Palestine.

Thinking thus, I lay back in the grass, watching the rim of the blue sky between the tall, red poppies. I thought again of David and Jonathan. It was a story very dear to me when I was a little boy, for

the isolation of my life in New Zealand found solace in it. I imagine that every lonely boy has shared my dream. The story of David and Jonathan was the inspiration of the first friendship I made in my life. And my friend was slain, in France. Jonathan, swifter than an eagle, stronger than a lion.

As I lay there, I heard a rustling in the grass at my side. I sat up and saw one of the young Jewish farmers standing near me. He had climbed the hill in my wake. His back was straight and, beneath his scant shirt and shorts, his body was strong as iron. His eyes were clear. There were both fire and peace in them. The slope was so steep that, lying back, I saw him standing high against the burning sky. The weapons of war were perished. The boy came with a gentle story of work in the fields and of the dwindling hopes of his harvest.

He sat beside me and he shared my wine. He told me of an old man still living in Tel Aviv, whom the Jews have to thank for all the land bought in this part of the country. Then he pointed to a fenced square of ground on the hill near by. "There the old man will be buried when he dies," he said. The grave looked out over the plain, and it was pressed in against the hill, in a high place.

"But don't you think that monuments and memorials are a great mistake?" I said. "They are the symbol of something all young people of to-day should fight against, whether they are Jews or Moslems or Christians. They are the symbol of history worship, and I feel that we have always

kept our eyes too much on the road behind us and not enough on the road before us. The old and dead should not expect to be remembered individually. Their memorial lies in what they contribute to the history of character. Their memorial should be impersonal."

"Yes," he answered, "but this will be a grave and not a monument. The monument to the old man lies in the great country spreading out before you."

"How many are in your settlement?" I asked.

"Thirty, and fifteen of us speak at least a little English."

I asked him how they used their leisure, when the work in the fields was over.

"We have music, and we have discussions over the table. Every two weeks, we have an exhibition of reproductions of pictures. We gather these from all over Palestine. Last time we had an exhibition of reproductions of Impressionist pictures. Next time we are to have Dutch painters."

He led me down the hill, past the daisies and the mimosa, into the settlement. The simple, clean houses were built with gardens about them. A white figure appeared at the door of one of the houses. A nurse. We entered on tiptoes and spoke in whispers. The two babies of the settlement were sleeping behind misty folds of white net.

Outside were all the simple signs of husbandry. Farm implements leaned against the walls, for the men were now in from the fields and they were



already at dinner. A strapping girl, with all the dark beauty of a Jewess but with the muscles of a workman, stalked across the farmyard, alert and proud. My friend walked down to the road with me. When I turned to say "Good-bye," I asked him his name. "Abia," he answered.

"But your other name?" I asked.

"We do not use any but our first name," he said. "We do not wish to impose our personal identity upon people. We are a community. There is the best known young poet and composer of folk-songs in all Palestine living near to us here, and nobody outside the community knows his full name. His songs are sung all over the country. He is a shepherd, and the songs he writes are of his life . . . of the sheep and of the fields, of the crops and of the countryside."

I left him and went back to the road. The sun had moved so far over the arch of blue that the colours of the mountain had changed. The shadows were deeper, the upper edges more vividly golden. I passed out into the valley, between the thirsty fields. The eucalyptus leaves were motionless. There were no sounds and no movements anywhere.

But the picture was not tender to the end. As I travelled along the road, I came upon water channels stretching and writhing through the grassland. Irrigation is bringing the end to the curse that David laid upon the slopes of Gilboa.

In this lies the difference between the old Jews



THE JEWS OF YESTERDAY



THE ZIONISTS OF TO-DAY



who are bent over their books of law, and the young Jews who have straightened their backs before the call of Zionism. The old men still lower their black hats over the thumb-marked books and they read :

“ Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you. . . .”

The young Jew throws aside his book. He is impatient with the old curses. So he sets out with his spade and his irrigation schemes to destroy the prophecy of David. Where history has decreed that the earth shall be parched and without dew or rain, he will build his water canals, and he will *compel* the land to flow with milk and honey.

*An Arab speaks*

To-day I talked to an Arab whose family have lived in Jerusalem for eight hundred years. They have always been judges and teachers, and he is himself a scholar and a teacher. He spoke, with humour and quiet, of the state of his country. “ I am willing to see every possible merit in Zionism,” he said. “ And I am willing to admit that the Jews have suffered terribly at the hands of both European and Eastern civilisation. But even the kindness of a British Mandate and the passion of the Zionists cannot establish a national home in Palestine without the will of the Arabs. The aggressive political policy of the Jews is contrary to the Arab nature. It is impossible for the Jew to understand any nature

but his own. Intellectually, he is completely selfish and self-centred.

“The Arabs draw their character from the mystery of the desert. It is because of this that your people of the West can never understand us. The little Arab family on the coast, perhaps near Haifa, has cousins living in the foothills. They have cousins living in the mountains behind them, and these have cousins in the ultimate desert. There you have a chain, stretching from the seacoast into the mystery of the sands. The question of the difference between the Arabs and the Jews goes deeper than mere politics or economics. You must remember the great, sleeping force of the foothills and of the mountains and of the desert behind Palestine. Then you must decide whether it is possible for a small strip of country, wedged in between the Mediterranean and the desert, with Arab traditions, to change its character and become a country *of* the Jews and *for* the Jews. It could never remain individual and Jewish, with the force of the desert pressing upon one side and the Mediterranean on the other.

“You must remember also that no conqueror has ever changed our character, even with the force of armies behind him. The Romans were here for six hundred years, but we emerged from their dominion, unchanged and almost untouched. They left none but crumbling monuments behind them. The Greeks came, and Greek became the language of our commerce. But the force of the desert was too

great for them. It pressed them back into the sea, and all you will find of them is turning to dust. The Crusaders came, and all that remains of them are a few churches. The Cretans and the Egyptians were here. Both were broken down and assimilated into the country. Before the British occupation, the Turks were here for four hundred years, and it is astounding, when you go about the country now, to see that they made little or no impression upon either the landscape or the people. Their very roads are overgrown and are being swallowed back into the earth from which they were cut. We have remained Arab, and, even if it were our will, I do not believe that Palestine could change.

“What have you here, in Palestine? A strip of agricultural country, bordered by the Mediterranean on one side and by the Jordan on the other. The Jews are builders of cities. Their conception of Heaven is of a golden city. More than seventy per cent. of the Jews sent here under the ægis of Zionism have stayed in the towns. This is fatal in an agricultural country. If they are to neglect the earth and to build towns, how can they expect to withstand the hordes and hordes of Arabs on the other side of the Jordan? We are a patient and philosophical people. But if ever the Arabs on the other side of the Jordan choose to rise and sweep across the narrow water, Zionism would be swept off its narrow stretch of earth into the Mediterranean. I do not mean that the Arabs would rise in *battle*. That would not be necessary. The process of assimilation and

the movements of peaceful people could oust the Jews as readily as arms or bloodshed.

“ In the old days, the Arabs never objected to the Jews. For hundreds of years my family has owned a house near to the Wailing Wall, and we have always been accustomed to seeing the pious Jews coming there. They were unmolested, and nobody begrudged them the Wailing Wall and what it meant to them. But when the war passed, when the Jews became Zionists, it was a different matter. We were willing and accustomed to the Wailing Wall as a shrine for the Jews. But when it was turned into blatant propaganda for raising money among the Jews of the world, we were violent. In 1928, the Zionist funds were decreasing. The Jews in America and in other countries were tiring of the notion of pouring more and more money into the scheme. So the Zionist leaders dressed up the stories of the suffering of the Jews at the Wailing Wall, to arouse the anger and to stir the generosity of the flagging subscribers. The Arabs could live in peace with the old Jews. But when their sons became haughty, arrogant propagandists, our relationship with them became impossible.”

I asked him to tell me what he thought of Great Britain's treatment of the Jews, in the light of the Balfour Declaration.

“ You must remember,” he answered, “ that the Jews have read into the Balfour Declaration all kinds of promises which were never intended. Mr. Balfour said in his declaration that His Majesty's

Government 'viewed with favour' the establishment of a national home for the Jews. Those words are important. The British Government is too careful to make its declarations carelessly. To view a scheme 'with favour' does not pledge the British Government very far. It certainly did not commit the British Government to the destruction of Arab rights, nor did it bind them to one-tenth of the favours and privileges the Jews are demanding. The Jews have read their own fanaticism into the Balfour Declaration, and they have ceased to understand the true value of its words.

"You have given the Jews the two biggest concessions in the country, the Dead Sea<sup>1</sup> and the Rutenburg<sup>2</sup> Concessions. You have allowed them to possess one-fifth of the best land in the country. There were fifty thousand Jews in this country before the war. Now there are more than one hundred and sixty thousand. They have no gratitude. They have never thanked England for one act of generosity or clemency. You have aided them in stamping the Hebrew language upon Palestine. It is on our coins and it is on our stamps. I think that England has served Jewry well."

I asked then if the Arabs had any cause for gratitude. If they were grateful for the amount of money brought into the country through the sale of land to the Jews. He said, "Most of the big tracts of country bought by the Zionists were owned by

<sup>1</sup> The potash works on the shores of the Dead Sea.

<sup>2</sup> The electrical works on the banks of the Jordan.



absentee landlords, and therefore the money has not come to Palestine. It has gone to rich Arabs living out of the country. The Sursuks of Beirut made the biggest land deal in the country. None of the money from this came to the Bedouins and Arab farmers, turned off the land to make room for the Jews. Some of these Arab farming families had lived on the land for hundreds of years. I can remember what an uproar there was in England when your Mr. Lloyd George presented a scheme for buying up land from private owners and controlling it under a system of State officials. The methods by which land has been bought here has led to almost as much tyranny as Mr. Lloyd George's scheme might have done. And, in answer to your question as to how far the Arabs have benefited from the sale of the land, I would like to tell you the sad story of the Tul Karm estate, which was sold to the Jews. Here at last, it seemed, the Arabs would get some of the money. But it was found that the mortgages held on the land, by a Jew in Paris, were so great that we got almost none of it after all."

My Arab friend waved his hand then. It was the first time he had moved from a leaning, strained position. We were sitting on the balcony of a hotel in Jerusalem, looking out over a small valley, to the walls of the old city. As he waved his hand, he said, "But these things do not matter. Zionism and the quarrels in this country do not depend upon economics or politics. They depend upon the temper of the desert. People who come here must remember

the Romans and the Greeks and the Crusaders and the Cretans. The desert demands either the assimilation or the destruction of any people who come here. And, fantastic as it may seem, I believe that many of the Jews who have come here so bravely, to claim the land for themselves, are already breaking down beneath Arab influences. Very often, in the streets of Jerusalem, I hear Jews speaking their Hebrew in an Arab dialect, and, among the older Jewish families, you will find the wives abandoning their own food and adopting ours. That is a deep and terrible sign, for domestic life is the basis of national life, and these small signs of assimilation are of tremendous importance. You know," my friend said, as he was leaving me, "it would be a sad day for the Jews if they *did* have a national home, for their virility has been made by adversity, and, when adversity ends for them, decadence will begin."

## JERUSALEM

*April*

COMING from the garden beside Galilee to the tumults of Jerusalem is like passing from a placid village church into a battle-field. How curious and true it is that men absorb character and temperament from the form of the landscape which surrounds them ! The fortitude and independence of the Scotsman belongs to the rugged loneliness of the Highlands, as inevitably as the phlegmatic and formal character of the Englishman belongs to the more subdued and even countryside of the south. The persistent inter-marriage of the two people has done little to change this, and one still crosses the border into Scotland with the sensations of passing to a new and different country, inhabited by people who are different in character and inspiration from those one has left in England.

The colonists who went to the northern part of New Zealand remained English, settling down upon fields as calm and hillocks as gentle as those they had left in Sussex or Essex. In the south of New Zealand, where the mountains are brave and high, where the winds are cruel, coming up uninterrupted from the white spaces of the Antarctic, the character of the people is different : they are one with the Scottish tradition, to which so many of them belong. The

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influence of landscape is no less acute upon one's self. It is curious that suicides and desperate people so often turn to the seashore, the place of unending, melodramatic conflict between earth and water ; the farthest possible edge upon which they can escape from whatever misery has sickened them and driven them to death. In moments of exaltation man will climb a mountain, to symbolise his superiority, his difference from others.

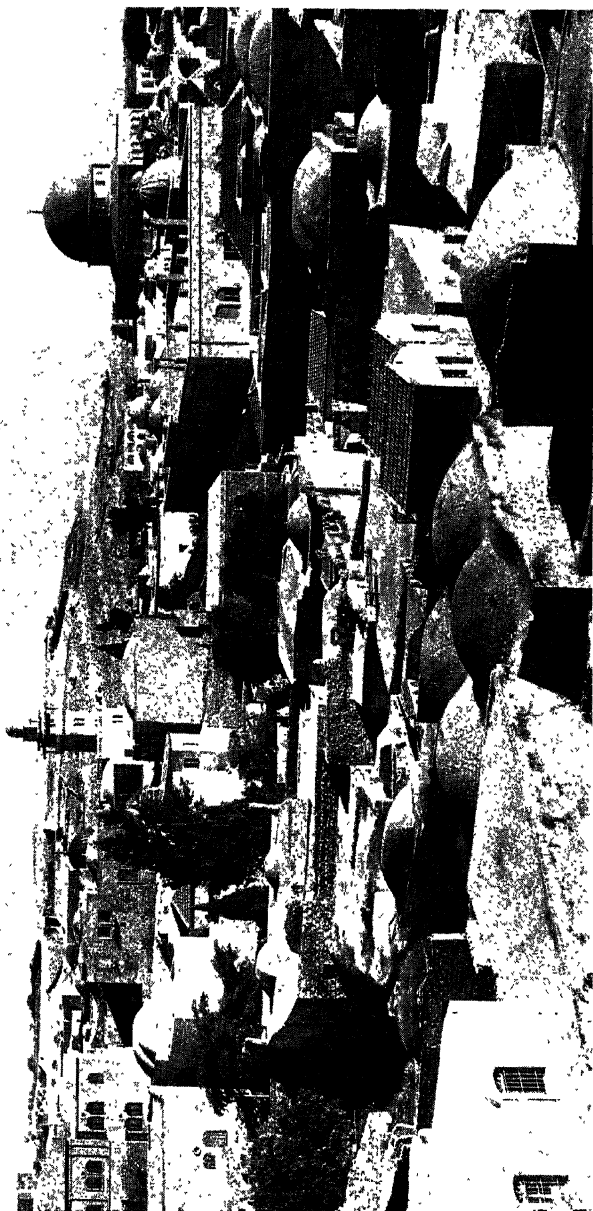
I shall never forget my first sight of Venice, from the sea. I had been discontented and miserable, from a riot of causes. I arrived there from Alexandria, hating every circumstance of my life, and hating my work ; as troubled as the landscape from which I had come. I awoke to see Venice, calm, with the long straight lines of the canals, the serenity of the Doge's Palace, shining in the sun. All the restful lines of Canaletto, forcing the wrinkles out of my temper, bringing me back to the peace from which I had been ousted. Does this peace, which comes from contemplating straight lines, force itself upon one in any place so much as in the gallery in Dresden, where you may sit in the Canaletto room and see, in the twelve or more pictures, the first and the last truth about serenity in landscape : peace in straight lines ?

Beside the Sea of Galilee, the country possesses some of this calm. There are hills, but they are lost in the overpowering, simple coast-line of the water. It was from this calm that the philosophy of Jesus came. Such a man could never have

been born among the mountains of the south. From the south all discontent has come ; all teachings that are hard or cruel. Beside Galilee, I was mostly at peace. Sometimes a wild Zionist would come into the garden, like a fabulous wasp, irritating my quiet with statistics and complaints. But, for the most part, the smooth, straight line of the shore was the smooth, straight line of one's daily life.

When you leave Galilee and come south, you climb perilous hills. The green of the grass fades from the valleys. The wild flowers, which grow so easily in the north, have to struggle for refreshment, and they looked tired and forlorn, regretting their existence. There are mountains pressed against mountains, stark and lifeless, with their fine dust rising in petulant eddies and then settling down again. Arid, militant mountains. Sinister ambassadors for the discontent, the endless politics, and the rivalries of the Holy City. The city in which Jesus was buried. The city to which He gave His mutilated body, but not His spirit.

Jerusalem is high upon a hill. It is the city of the stark and arrogant mountains. Its beauty is the beauty of old stone, simple arches, tumbled towers, and long bazaars. Its beauty begins and ends with the old city. To walk up the hill, between the new, monstrous Y.M.C.A., and the King David hotel, is æsthetic agony. The Y.M.C.A. cost one million dollars and in this, its beauties are described. However fine the motives behind this extravagance, one cannot help thinking wistfully of the Arabs, staring



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out from under their olive-trees, wondering where their winter bread is coming from. Jerusalem the terrible. City of tombs and anger. Little wonder that Jesus left them His body and took away His spirit. "This is My flesh that you have captured and hurt and destroyed. This I give unto you, since you have taken it. You may bury it beneath great stones and worship it, for you will always worship the flesh. But My spirit I shall take back to My Father, for this you can neither destroy nor possess." And it is true, for never was there such a worshipping of the flesh and such a neglect of the spirit as there is in this demented place.

From Jerusalem you descend to the Dead Sea. Down, down the flanks of the leafless mountains, mile upon mile, deeper and deeper, until you come to the deepest point of human habitation. You pass along the road by which the Good Samaritan walked. But this spirit too has fled. The country is as dry as a bone. The mountains are knife-edged, without a blade of grass upon them. Sometimes a spirited stream persists in a valley, far down below the golden mountain. In the end, you come to the Dead Sea, Nature's supreme joke. The bathing-house on its shores is lower beneath sea-level than any other house on the earth. The valley is dug so deep into the earth's surface that it seems to be a valley of hell. It is the valley of damnation. You can walk in the water and, no matter how many heavy stones you pile upon your belly as you float, you cannot sink. About the shores are fruit-trees. Here at



last, perhaps, is something that is not a caricature of Nature. You break the fruit and find that it is empty. A dead rattle of a thing. A husk ; apples of Sodom, they are called. There is nothing else alive. Beneath the sea of fantastic water are the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah. Perhaps if you were to lie on the shore of little pebbles and dig deep enough, you might come upon a bracelet or upon a bronze mirror, cast aside by a shameless quean, fleeing from destruction. Near by, on the slope, are the ruins of Jericho. The archæologists have been filtering its dust through their fingers for a long time now, and in little piles among the tumbled walls there are broken earthenware pots, and fragments of shapes, discarded from the booty. The tall, black guide leads you over the chaos of stones. *This fall down wall, Joshua time*, he tells you. Then he turns to another meaningless heap of stones. *This fall down wall, Joshua time*, he says again. It is all *fall down wall*. Jerusalem and Jericho, dead, dust upon dust, ended.

Picturesque ! Yes, that is the word for it. You have only to refer to your guide-book to know that. But it is Baedeker and not the Bible which is going to help you to understand the new Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem, the great hotel blares and shines upon the high land. In the bar are good fellows, wearing the ties of their Public Schools. All good fellows ! They talk wistfully of their life in England and wonder if that dark-haired barmaid still shakes "a nifty cocktail at Hackett's." The older

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ones, who have not been home for many years, do not know the names of the new, smart restaurants and night-clubs. Some are old enough to remember Gatti's and Romano's and they speak of the "Cri!" Some day they will fly home from Jerusalem and find that great gaps have grown up between them and their old friends. They will be lonely and forlorn in the very London for which they ached. They will return to Jerusalem and the great stretches of thirsty country with something of the sensation of home-coming with which they thought they would approach England.

Out upon a distant hill shines the one thing of beauty in the new Jerusalem. Government House, a lion in shining white stone, crouching, as a guardian over the distant medley of causes and jealousies. It dispenses justice and patience among the disgruntled.

When a certain vulgarian of the last century went to Rome for the first time, he came back and said to his English friends, "Well, you can 'ave Rome." For my part, you can 'ave Jerusalem. I love the labyrinth of the old city, with its jostling hundreds and its pungent smells. But the labelled shrines and the new, spick and span buildings offend me. And they hurt me. Last night I went out to the Mount of Olives with S. He lives in a quiet and gentle garden, in the heart of the old city. He grows roses in his garden, and, from its wall, you can look down into the crowded bazaar. In his cool courtyard, you may sit and listen to good music or turn over the pages of *Pride and Prejudice* or the prints in an

old book on the Holy Land. He represents the triumph of Poetry over Downing Street. He took me away from it all last night, to the Mount of Olives. The moonlight fell upon the trees and spun gossamer shapes between their shadows. I had been busy all day, and, in the evening, I had been to a party of Zionists. Their sincerity is amazing, but their intensity leaves one exhausted. Standing upon the hill with S., who remained still and silent, I was able to look back upon Jerusalem, noble in shape, crowning the hill : eternal repose of stone, eternal agitation of man. Some day, perhaps, I shall know why it horrifies me. It has already snatched the Bible story-book of my childhood out of my hand. Assuming the shape of an ogre, it clutched the coloured pages from under my eyes and muttered, "Humbug and fancy, humbug and fancy." How much will be left when I go away I do not know. Perhaps the gap will be filled with something greater, some knowledge and conviction stronger than the story-book was able to give me. But there is much pain in the transition.

I have been in Jerusalem for ten days now, torn upon one side by the Zionists and their eager propaganda, soothed and lured upon the other side by the old city, with its dirt, its shadows, its colour. Its inconsequential Arabs passing up and down the long bazaars, pressed close. The stinking corners, the little, arched shops, each lit by one globule of light. Copper-beaters upon their haunches, festering babies crawling over the fetid cobbles, clatter and

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noise, black-veiled women, jostled by the rumps of the asses, strings of garlic, shops of holy candles, souvenirs in mother-of-pearl and souvenirs in olive-wood. In one shop they showed me a piece of the true cross. Then the little mean, lying voice. "Genuine, sir, genuine. I give you guarantee."

Then the incredible slip of paper before my eyes.

"No, thank you. Oh, yes, I am *quite* sure it is genuine. But no, thank you." And then the running out into the light, as if from seeing some indecent act.

Oranges and lemons piled high above new and nameless vegetables. Lemons in the old city. Half a lemon saves your life in the old city. Every time I walked through the bazaar to the Wailing Wall I bought a lemon, cut it, and buried my nose in it. One came to know the worst of the stinking corners and when to bury ones nose deepest.

The Jews are pressed against the Wailing Wall. One emaciated woman falls in a heap, a bundle of old serge and thin limbs, with only her lips moving, like the lips of a carp in an aquarium, praying, pausing to press them against the stone. And then muttering again. In another place, the Moslems are leaving their shoes outside the door of their mosque. In another, the Christians are buying candles, each white cylinder gay with sprigs of painted flowers and saints, to take into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. "Grim and alien, grim and alien." There is no holiness here. If Jesus passed this way, there is no shadow of Him now.

A sharp voice announces "Here is the room of the Last Supper." The guide is in a hurry, so we are pushed in and out again, before our eyes have become used to the dim light. "Here was the scourging." Down some steps; a penny for a candle, please; down some more steps—they are steep and you might slip on to your behind—take care—turn to the right, and here, in this crevice, is no less a sight than the Virgin's tomb. The bile of horror, and the torture of incredulity. The tinsel flowers and *immortels* on the Virgin's tomb are dusty.

Out into the air again. This time, to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Deep in the shadows, smelling of incense, the roof hung with a hundred lamps. Deeper into the shadows, and here is *the tomb*. Here it is that they put His body, when His spirit eluded them.

I went there for the ceremony of the Holy Fire and stayed upon the floor, with the mass of the people. I was choked by the body smells and I was bruised and broken by the mob. The church was packed with zealots. It is their greatest day, the day when God gives them a flame, to prove that He has not forgotten them. Not a *spiritual* flame. There is something too uncertain about a spiritual flame. A *real* flame. You know where you are with a real flame. The priests know too. Out of the stone it comes, ostensibly, from God. It is not easy to tell your flock that God sends them a spiritual flame! They cannot see it. But a candle flame! They are certain then.

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They pressed in around me. They had come, black as coal from Abyssinia, tall and graceful from the Soudan, pale from Greece. A jumble of colour and tongue. Upon the walls were shelves, and upon these the cripples were spread, one above the other. All held tapers in their hands, waiting for *the fire*. The heat was sickening and the tapers melted and wilted in their hands. The Patriarch, a beautiful, pale old man, splendid with jewels, preceded by banners and singers, passed by. The crowd pressed back to make room for him, and the weight against my chest was so great that I gasped for my breath. Then more and more came. The tapers were held aloft, a forest of little wilting wax trees. Ten Abyssinians, some with vermilion hats, pressed out of one corner and began to sing. The others clapped their hands, rhythmically and persistently. The beating became louder and louder, until there were a thousand excited believers staring towards the stone tomb, beating their hands in the air, droning a dirge. Their excitement frightened me. I was stirred by the passion in the air, and then, as if some power were truly coming out of the sepulchre, I trembled with horror. Once the tide of dark men was so strong that I was forced back against the wall. I fell, and my back was bruised and hurt, my shoulder torn against the stone. I forced my way on to my feet again. Here and there, in the dense mob, was a British policeman, calm, estranged, and orderly. But they could not control the surging mass of people. Nor could they calm the passionate expectation.

In the end, the flame burst out of the stone. It sent a tremor of light over the walls and over the faces of the people near to me. Then they pressed forward and fell upon the flame with their tapers, mad and terrible. They screamed and they tore their clothes. The tapers and the candles were pressed forward and, from the one, embryonic flame, a thousand grew. One taper leaned towards the next : the fire was handed on and on. Like fearful blossoms they spread, spilling hot wax on to my face and my hands. Flame upon flame, until they reached the edge of the mob, against the walls. Then the cripples on the shelves leaned forward and stretched their tapers down for the holy fire. Then they leaned up and those above them stretched down and caught the flame from them. Vines of fire, growing up the walls, until all the church was blazing. One mad wretch fell foul of the police. I saw them clutch at his writhing body. It was almost naked, and it twisted in their hands like so many snakes. He eluded them and ran to the door. The burning taper was still in his hand. Out he ran, to spread the holy fire over Jerusalem. I followed him. Hundreds of flames were abroad by then, multiplying themselves, up the long bazaar. Taper leaning towards taper, sending the fire on and on through the city. I heard only one voice I recognised. A disinterested British policeman, withdrawn from the surging traffic, put out a hand to help me. I forced my way out of the mass and stood next to him. "I'm fed oop," he said, with nothing but disdain in his

quiet, humourless voice. I left him and hurried up to the Jaffa Gate. I was so bruised, and my feet were so hurt from my fall, that I limped over the irregular cobbles. At the Jaffa Gate, the open space was a garden of flames. Every man pressed forward and handed his light on to his neighbour. There were no unlit tapers now.

I went away. I walked up to the Mount of Olives again, to be alone. The feeling I brought away was half of horror and half of fear. I had no sense of having been near anything holy : not even the sense of having observed devotion.

In the afternoon, I motored to Bethlehem with S. We stood in a corner of the oldest church in Christendom and saw the beautiful pillars, worn and mellow. Then we went towards the sanctuary. The holy fire had reached Bethlehem. The candles burned, patiently, upon the altar, and near by a British policeman walked. Outside the church, an offensive little man tried to sell me a crucifix. "Three sizes," he said. "Three shilling, two shilling, and one shilling."

Bethlehem. The star that rose o'er Bethlehem. Where now is the story I learned as a child ? Where now are the quiet Sundays upon my uncle's farm in New Zealand, when he used to draw the lamp towards him and read to us ? He was old, and his beard was long. The farmhouse was a long way from any town, and we could not always go to church. Once a month the parson rode over to preach a sermon. We used to watch him, riding up between



the fields of bullocks and ostriches towards the house. He preached in the dining-room, and the farm hands and our one neighbour would come, leaning forward upon the dining-room chairs, to listen to his story of the Lamb of God. My uncle would read the lessons. I believed in my uncle's voice with all the passion of a lonely child.

I met the English boy, of whom I wrote in the first pages of this book, when I returned to Jerusalem from Bethlehem. He was waiting for me, "to talk," he said, because he is with his family and they "do not understand." He was to be ordained, and he contemplated a rigorous order of priests with whom he would be almost shut away from the world. He was making this last journey, to touch the shrines of his belief: to see the ground upon which Jesus walked to Calvary. We sat upon the balcony, watching the far-away mountains and the changing lights upon the city wall.

"I cannot go on," he said. "It is terrible. I have prayed and prayed for some sort of peace in which to understand. But everything here is destroying me." Jerusalem had caught him up and twisted him and played with him. I tried to tell him. "But why, if you *knew* God, if you were so certain of the spirit? Why, oh, why did you have to come here to touch the stones? Surely it is only sentimentality. It is not a spiritual journey. Why should you want to see a tomb, when, as you say, you have been able to close your eyes and *know* the spirit which has deserted that tomb?" I failed

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to find any phrase to help him. I too was confused and distraught. "Go home and forget it," I said. We talked for a long time. The darkest grey lights were falling upon the wall when he left me. He seemed to be alienated and alone.

In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the Christians press against the stone. They are jealous of the number of lamps each sect hangs against the tomb of Jesus. They accept the holy fire that bursts from its side. Their eyes are focused upon the tomb that holds His body. They never seem to look up or out into the great spaces, where His body is not, but where His spirit may still be waiting for them, suffering perpetual crucifixion because of their neglect.

VI

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

*April*

TURNING away from all economic and political considerations, it seems that the problem of the British Government officials in Palestine is to guard and encourage the peaceful settlement of two races, each with differences of religion, morality, and ethics, upon a piece of country as big as Wales.

The English and the Irish have lived side by side for hundreds of years, sharing the same language, laws, and traditions of government, the same traditions of wars fought together. They are bound together by intermarriage and by the same literature. Yet they cannot live without bloodshed. How then can anybody expect people with such different standards as the Jews, the Arabs, and the Christians to live together in peace : people brought from far scattered countries, speaking a dozen different languages, sharing no traditions of religion, government, or social life ? If the British Government has failed to curb the Irish brat, after the sweating effort of centuries, how can anybody in Westminster, Geneva, or Jerusalem expect a High Commissioner and his officials to do a far more terrible task in a handful of years ?

Here in Palestine we have a perfect revival of the joke about the mother-in-law. The League of

Nations appears in the rôle of the match-maker. "It would be such a pretty notion," she says, "if the Jews and the Arabs could live in married contentment in the golden valleys of Palestine. We in Europe have been warring for years, having a picnic of blood, killing each other by the million. Now let us dispense peace. Let us make these lesser people obey the very laws we have violated. Let us inculcate the highest ideals of citizenship into these opposed people, and, if they dare to follow our example and shed a drop of blood, let us pounce upon them and punish them."

So the Jew and the Arab are to wed in peace. There is a touch of unwillingness and suspicion . . . they do not accept the wedding present of the League of Nations, a dove of peace, with all the grace they might have shown. So the English mother-in-law is called upon. That misjudged, earnest woman is prevailed upon to stay with the young couple upon what S. calls "an interminable milk and honey moon." They were delighted at first. They invited her to stay on and on, for their marriage-bed was tousled through disagreement and she seemed to put a curb on their monstrous behaviour. Now the earnest and God-fearing lady is no longer wanted. They would give anything to see the interfering martinet pack up her trunks and go home, so that they might arrange for a divorce.

I have an Arab friend who comes to see me. He has a sparkling sense of fun and he has none of the gloom of the discontented about him. When I am

tired of interviews and pamphlets, he comes and teaches me to extract nonsense from it all. His visits are good for me. To-day he brought a Jew and an Arab with him, to meet me. It was a brave thing to do, for we sat down with less social ease than I have known in all my life. We might have been "cases" in the waiting-room of a notoriously brutal dentist. Indeed, the Jew *did* lean forward and finger a magazine which was on the table.

"Now," said my friend, with a devilish twinkle in his eye, for he is incapable of being serious about anything, "we must all be honest and try to help each other to understand the truth. Perhaps Mr. Bolitho would like to ask some questions."

I turned to the Jew and said, "I should like to understand what the Zionists expect from Great Britain in the Jewish return to Palestine."

He answered me readily, as if the first word were already sitting upon his tongue when I asked the question: "The Jews have always contributed to other civilisations. We have never had a civilisation of our own. England was the first country to have an enlightened view of the place of the Jew in modern life. The last pogrom in England was one hundred and eighty years ago: the pogrom of Leeds. That was the end of the English persecution. You have accepted Jews in your public life, you have made one of them Prime Minister and another Viceroy of India. Queen Victoria made Disraeli her friend. The eyes of all the Jews of Europe were turned towards England then. Jewish parents of the last

century, in Poland, Germany, and Russia, brought up their children with the one idea : that they should cross the channel and live in England, the country of tolerance and justice."

"But has this feeling changed?" I asked.

The Jew became passionate. "Yes, it has changed, because England has destroyed it. When the Balfour Declaration was published, we looked upon it as the one light which had broken through the darkness of our racial unhappiness for two thousand years. At last, we thought, the most enlightened nation of the world has been chosen to interpret us to the rest of the world : to give us protection and peace on earth, so that we might slowly undo two thousand years of wrong living and, at last, learn good-will towards men. That is what we had lost through our being ostracised for two thousand years . . . any sense of duty towards our Christian neighbours. Adversity had removed our desire for the good of our fellow-men. We were forced to spend all our energies upon self-preservation.

"The last fifteen years have both created and broken the hope we had in England," he continued. "But the Jews have outlived men greater than Passfield. They have outlived Roman Emperors."

The Arab sat in polite silence while the Jew spoke to me. I turned to both of them and asked them if they could suggest another country which could supplant my sinful England and govern Palestine well. I pointed out that our tradition for honour and purity was a great strain upon us. I pointed

out that foreigners would never judge us by common and human standards : that we were always confused with the divine. They smiled and admitted this. Then I became a trifle angry. I was tired of the incessant criticism, and I suggested that perhaps Germany, under a Hitler Government, would add no end of excitement and change to the life of the Zionists in Palestine.

The Arab spoke then—his one contribution to the conversation up to now. "No, all governments are bad for us," he said. I suggested that this drew the discussion beyond my limited reason, so we descended to simple argument again.

I enlarged the vision of Palestine being governed by some other power. I said that I thought Signor Mussolini was perhaps the only man who could give the Jews and Arabs the brave leadership for which they prayed. It would be vastly entertaining to observe the slow growth of Papist power in a national home for Jews. It would be interesting also to see how far Signor Mussolini would be able to withstand the temptation to use the idle Arab lands for his own overflow of population. Italian statesmen were already glancing about the Mediterranean, and farther afield, in search of territory for the superfluous people.

And America ! Here was a fresh field of possibilities ! England, with its minority of Jews, had no political axe to grind in gaining favour with Jewish voters. Not so America, where in New York alone there were three million Jews. Jewry would never

be a plank in England's political platform, because the small number of Jews in England were assimilated into its life. So securely indeed, that the English Jews had come to cast no more than a momentary glance at their history of suffering. And the English system of awarding social prizes to its Jews vouchsafes their remaining loyal Britons.

In America, where anti-Semitic feeling was high and where Semitic power was vast, it was exciting and almost romantic to think of the graft and humbug which would be born among American officials if Palestine languished under the Stars and Stripes.

Nor must the Arabs or the Jews, I urged, feel in any way squeamish about political corruption, and bribery in the country which governed them. Corruption is merely the growing-pains in national character. It is comparatively healthy in a young country, as measles are healthy in a child. It is only in an old and stabilised civilisation that corruption and bribery are horrible and disastrous.

Then I urged the qualities of France upon my visitors. The French, I said, were the most astute people and also the most sentimental people in the world. How would France rule Palestine? She had been called the Jew of Europe, so she would perhaps do it very well. First of all, the French would have been clever enough to realise the one great possibility in controlling Palestine : the chances of gaining favour among the powerful Jews of the world. I told them that, as an enlightened and almost revolutionary Briton, I was sometimes



exasperated at the stupidity of my own people in not having realised this glowing opportunity at the beginning of the Mandate.

France, I said, would have won the hearts of all Jewry, in every country, by bestowing favours upon Palestine. Those favours might act like too many meringues upon a child. The Zionists might ultimately be destroyed by France's kindness, because, after all, it is hardship and not indulgence which is going to give the Palestine Jews a tradition of character. Palestine of the future will prosper according to the extent of the suffering of the Jews of to-day, not according to their contentment.

This would be a matter for the future. In the meantime, France would indulge her new child to the utmost of its capacity for meringues. Observing France's indulgence, the Jews of the world would smile upon her and the Jewish bankers and merchants would reward her accordingly.

Then the second Arab spoke. His fire had smouldered for a long time. He was a metallic, complaining little man, and I did not mind if I hurt him. "You know of all the countries, and you tell us about them," he said. "We also know a little of England. I will tell you about her. And we know a little about the methods of the British Government. I will tell you. You make an Empire in many places. You grow rich. The King has many palaces. You choose the countries in which there are many people, fighting one against the other. You choose Africa, where the Dutch and the

Kaffirs do not like each other, so you keep peace between them. You choose India, where the Moslems and the Hindus are always fighting. And you keep peace between them. And you come here, where the Jews and the Arabs are not friends, and you try to make peace. It is a very good business, this peace-making. You sit back and make much money while all the people quarrel."

His anger left him and he sat back. "You are angry because I say this of your people?" he said.

"On the contrary," I reassured him. "We are nowhere near as clever as that. If you think our colonization has been carried out upon such a solid idea, I am pleased. No, we are not as clever as that. We have not been so richly flattered for a long, long time."

### *Intellect and Idealism*

The two greatest qualities in the Zionists whom I meet are their scholarship and their idealism. But it is unfortunate that neither of these two qualities has ever *built* a nation, no matter how much they may have contributed to its later history. They can do no more than bind the people of an already established nation more closely together. In the building of a new people, a new nation, there must first of all be action, usually in battle. The only kind of national idealism which has ever grown and survived in a people has had its roots in action. The new countries of the British Empire have been made upon action. It was only after they fought the

Maoris and dug the earth and crossed the mountains and braved the storms of two hemispheres that the New Zealanders allowed themselves the luxury of ideals and scholarship. It is well that new countries should be captured with swords and that new people should establish themselves by the power of the spade and not by the power of the pen. The hideous nightmare in Zionism comes with the recollection that they are *buying* their land instead of fighting for it. And no great nation has ever bought its earth.

Nor have the greater leaders of nations ever been great scholars. Leaders are made by character. Hindenberg is not a brilliant man. With the force of character, he holds his sad and unhappy country together, while the merely clever ones fight for power. The purely intellectual man can never do more than walk at the heels of greatness, like Tacitus at the heels of his Emperor. The intellectual man is never more than the reporter of other men's achievements. History is made by men of character : scholars merely record it. Zionism has enlisted too many scholars and too few farmers and soldiers.

## THE FIRST JEWISH CITY

*April*

A FEW years ago, the coast near to the town of Jaffa was a dull line of sand-dunes, without character or colour. It was the edge of the Mediterranean, the place where the desert of the East made its militant stand against the ocean of the West. The battle between sand and water had drained all colour and expression out of the sea-coast. It was a monotony of sub-fusc colours, and even the legend of St. George and the dragon and the story of Jonah's journey in the belly of the whale did not redeem the coast near Jaffa from dullness.

When the Zionists spun their dream of a national home, they thought also of a city : a seaport through which they could pour their oranges and bananas out upon the world. Their heaven is a golden city. They could not build a national home without spending many of their thousands of pounds upon big houses and streets. They brought their dream to the dun-coloured sea-coast near Jaffa, and here they built a city overnight, a city of forty-seven thousand people. All of them Jews. The only Jewish city in the world. During April and May, these ardent people are celebrating the building of the city and the achievement of the Jews in Palestine with a great fair. It is already open, and it has

brought thousands of pounds' worth of orders to Palestine. The Arabs are boycotting the fair, but already almost a quarter of a million people have seen it. A Jewish Wembley. And yet there are not more than an eighth of a million Jews in all Palestine. They have called their city Tel Aviv—the hill of hope. It is the most astonishing metropolis on the shores of the Mediterranean. The building of a city beside the sea, with the Mediterranean as its prospect and the sand-dunes as its foundation, is in itself a manifestation of change in the Jews. For they have never been sea-port builders. I have been told that there is no Hebrew word for sea-port. From the beginning, it has been the nature of the Jews to turn their backs upon the water and move inland.

When the Arab from the neighbouring town of Jaffa walks along the road to peep at Tel Aviv, he nods his head with a dismal motion. He is contented with his ragged clothes and his simple house. He has no material ambitions and his luxuries are sleep and stillness. How then can he understand this busy collection of people, with their shops and their pursuit of efficiency? This thin little Arab, with his fine features and his spatula hands, is a fatalist and, if you ask him what he thinks of the Jewish City, he will say, "It is built upon sand. Romans and Greeks and others have crossed the Mediterranean and they have come to the edge of our desert, to try and make their own civilisation here. But always, after bearing patiently with them

## THE FIRST JEWISH CITY

for a little while, the desert has risen in protest and it has pressed them back into the sea again. The desert is vast, and if it chooses to breathe, and to move, Western civilisation falls off its edge, into the water."

Nevertheless, with a conglomeration of architecture which is bewildering, the Jews have come from almost every corner of the world to build their first city. Balconies from Berlin—they might have been snatched from one of those residential streets that lead on to the Grunewald. Verandahs from American bungalows ; arches and domes strangely torn from Russia ; modern German wallpapers from Frankfurt. All are hurled together, to make the ugliest and yet, perhaps, the most vital city I have ever seen. Each Zionist has come here, weighed down by the taste of the country from which he so gladly made his escape. The result is a muddle of shapes and towers and balconies and doors and colours, such as has never been brought together in one place before. *Æsthetically*, Tel Aviv is a sad blunder.

The passion and energy which have gone into making the Jewish city are not to be denied. They assault you the moment you leave the orange-groves through which the city is approached. I went to Tel Aviv from Tiberias, over the worst road in Palestine. Indeed, it is the only poor stretch of main road I have found in the country. The small roads between villages are wild and tortuous, but even these are being straightened and smoothed.

As we came near to Tel Aviv, the air was hot, and sweet with the smell of the orange blossoms. A few miles back, we had passed through a dilapidated but beautiful Arab village in which every line, every stone, and every curve seemed to rise naturally from the earth. The beauty of the least and the dirtiest of these Arab villages is the most satisfying experience the eye can enjoy in Palestine. From the dusty Arab village to the cool orange-groves : from the orange-groves, into the hot conglomeration of Tel Aviv. The sun burned down upon a hundred new houses, grouped together, some pell-mell, some facing the two or three central streets which were reminiscent of some mushroom town in the west of Canada. One of the streets is called Allenby Street.

I saw Tel Aviv from the roof of a high, new house, on a festival day. The Jewish population of the town had swelled to one hundred thousand. There were Russian Jews and Polish Jews, American Jews and Abyssinian Jews, brought from the corners of the earth, pressed into this new city, cheering and clapping as the procession went past. They spoke to each other in Hebrew. They were amazed before the wonders of their own achievement.

Early in the procession was a historical tableau. Then came groups of Jews in costumes. They represented pin-pricks at the British administration. It seems that we are a very wicked and dishonest people. Everywhere were the blue and white flags of the Zionists. Motor-cars passed, some carrying twelve or fourteen children : farm-wagons had come

in with their load of children, fourteen being dragged along by one donkey. It was neither grand nor distinguished, but the passion which had made it still held Tel Aviv in its grip. The air was alive. The faces of the people glowed with conquest. They had built the only Jewish city in the world.

"It is not well that Zionism, which is a back-to-the-land movement, should build a big city," said a British official. "There are not more than twenty-six per cent. of the Zionists working on the land. The remainder are in the towns. Palestine will never thrive with an urban population. It is an agricultural country and the percentage of city and country people should be the reverse."

We read in the Talmud that when Rab Eleazar observed a wheatfield, and the swaying corn, he said, "Continue to sway ; trade is to be preferred to you." And then he added, "He who expends a hundred sous in trade can enjoy meat and wine every day, but he who expends a hundred sous in agriculture has to be content with cabbage and salt, must sleep on the earth, and is exposed to every kind of misery." Is there any wonder that, with such lessons in the Talmud, the Jew builds a city into which he presses a quarter of the Jewish population of the country.

Yet, Tel Aviv is the expression of an ecstasy. The pride with which the Zionists point to their settlements is nothing to the pride with which I was shown Tel Aviv. "We have built a city . . . the only Jewish city in the world."



It lies, on the shores of the Mediterranean, incongruous, ugly, and passionate. The German Jew in Tel Aviv looks out towards Jaffa from a Berlin wrought-iron balcony. His neighbour sleeps beneath a domed roof which he copied from Moscow. The Polish Jewess stands upon her balcony and shakes a rug which was woven in the tiny village from which she came. The American Jew has given something of the character of a street-corner drug-store to his shop in the main street.

From the smiling conglomeration and the radiant sense of achievement, the Arab remains withdrawn and cynical. He stays in Jaffa. But if he does venture along the road between the two towns, he pauses on the edge of Tel Aviv and shakes his head. Then he repeats again, "It is built upon sand. No civilisation has ever been able to exist for very long upon the edge of our desert. Some day the great sand will breathe and move and then the city of the Jews will tumble into the sea and we shall have peace again."

VIII

ON THE PLAIN OF SHARON

*April*

I STAYED for two days upon a Zionist plantation on the plain of Sharon. I came to believe in its beauty and its economic foundations, but still more did I come to believe in the zeal of the Russians and Poles who live and work there. They are filling the plain of Sharon with orange-groves : their artesian water is bubbling out of the earth, globules of light, showers of silver. The orange-trees are stalwart and their leaves glow with good living.

The intensity of the Jerusalem Jews who have come to show us the orange-growers is bewildering and frightening. It is distressing to contemplate the violent passion of another man and remain perfectly calm within oneself. The vigour of the Jewish agitation makes me tired. It wearies me so that even my sympathy flags and I find myself becoming antagonistic. Their belief in what they are doing is terrible and selfish in its intensity. It is the contemplation of this intensity which makes so many Christians turn aside and withhold their sympathy from the Zionists. Men very often kill their cause with the violence of their pleading. One watches the Jews as if they were dervishes : as one watches a hypnotised person or a man possessed. Too much is happening within oneself, in the moment of

contemplation, for one to conjure up the unselfish emotions of sympathy or understanding.

I remember a day when I was twenty. I was in a training-camp in the North Island of New Zealand, a bitter, windy place without any beauty. Not even in the hills, except in the brief season when they were yellow with broom. The tents of the encampment were pitched in a wide valley which was a forsaken glacier bed. The ground was covered by immense, smooth boulders. Sometimes the wind was so strong that it lifted the heavy floorboards of the tents and carried them into the air, as carelessly as if they had been made of paper. It was winter and we sat in our bell tents, shivering, irritated to bitter answers and selfishness by the incessant rain and the wind. Some of us went out into the rain, to hammer in the tent-pegs. The weight of the water upon the canvas and the force of the wind, dragged them out of the soppy earth. Suddenly a demented man ran out of his tent, screaming, *I believe in God! I believe in God!* He ran among the tents, tripping over the ropes, scrambling and screaming. No one dared to run after him.

"Daft as a March hare," said the sergeant. But I knew that this was not true. The greyness, the cold and the sharpness had penetrated his soul. Two men caught him and brought him back and for an hour or more, curled up like a child, he lay whimpering upon the floor of his tent. I had watched him, but I could do nothing to help him.

My own horror was dragging at me too much for me to be able to begin to think, much less to *feel* anybody else's needs. I saw him again, when he was "well." And once again, by accident, in a field. There was a pub a little distance from the camp and most of us drank beer there in the evening, or on Saturday afternoon, when we were free to roam over the valley. It was easy and quick to return to the camp across country. Thus I happened upon him one afternoon, reeling drunk. I made him sit in the field and I went back to the public house and brought him some coffee. He was already in bad odour in the camp and a fresh misdemeanour would not have helped him. He whimpered against me, and then he slept. He was a poor wretched slip of a boy. Too dull to be a friend and too slow to make a friend. He half woke at one moment and put his hand out, fumbling, until it touched my arm. I sat there until it was almost dark and then I woke him. We talked a little. He was lonely, that was all. He almost cried when he recollected that I had brought the coffee to him. I walked back to the camp with him. He seemed to grow smaller and smaller, he was such a shrivelled and sad creature. But I saw him as he was in the beginning, as a figure of magnificence, passionate, rising from the blunder and the ugliness about him, and, mighty as a tree, with a voice that horrified me, crying out, "I believe in God."

I thought of him last night, when I watched the Russian Jews dancing in the lamplight. Some of

them were still little and thin. But they had risen from the poison of their existence in some Russian backwater, and they had rushed across the world, to the plain of Sharon, shouting, "I believe in the Jews! I believe in the Jews! I am a Jew! I shall make Zion blossom with the vigour of my hands. I shall make the plain beautiful. I shall cast the lazy Arabs off the earth and I shall make it sweet with the smell of orange blossoms, and I shall build houses, with bathrooms, and I shall fill the barns to bursting. I believe in the Jews. I am a Jew. I believe in Zion!"

One stands still in the face of the violence. Last night they danced and sang. Songs of Palestine, songs of the countries from which they came. It was a flowering, a rejoicing and a thanksgiving. But I was excluded from it all. Being the only Christian in a settlement of two hundred Jews is a strange and cold experience. They treated me kindly enough, but only as a stranger. In their eyes, I belonged to another world and I was almost a suspected creature. I might be of use, but no more than that. When I said that I should like to buy a small piece of land in Palestine . . . I had coveted a pocket handkerchief on the shore-line of Galilee . . . the Jew leaned across the table and his face became angry and greedy. He said that he could not sell land to a Christian. It was *all, all* for the Jews. In the moment when I said I should like to possess a small piece of land (I said it partly with the notion of pleasing him), I became an enemy. The

symbol of something against which he had been taught to defend himself. I feel this isolation so much that it drowns my sympathy and makes it impossible for me to give the understanding and tenderness one would naturally wish to give to a cause which is so deeply sincere.

Every interest is swept aside for the pursuit of one purpose. Their eyes open wide and they whisper, Zion ! Zion ! It possesses them so completely that, in talking of England and of the failure of our sympathy, they do not pause to remember that sympathy is a mutual emotion. That it is not merely given : that it is shared. The eagerness of the Zionists blinds them to sane consideration of their neighbours and they become cruelly selfish. They ask bounty and protection from England, but they never pause to consider how many troubles have been heaped upon us in the past few years. In brief, they do not seem to be interested in England. When the misdeeds of the British Government had been hammered into me until my nerves were shredded, I turned upon one man and gently pointed out that Great Britain also had her problems. Against their bludgeoning ; their complaint that we had treated the Balfour Declaration as " a scrap of paper," I spoke softly and said, " You must remember that England has been through a crisis which would have maimed any other country in Europe. You must remember that the inflation which devastated Germany has now come to us, and our character, our very souls are strained in an effort to survive the catastrophe.

I think," I urged, "that we have suffered our disaster with dignity. We have won more respect than we possessed before the inflation. We still come abroad and find ourselves respected everywhere, except in this country. You must be patient," I said. "While the father is tending his own wounds, he needs must neglect his children for a moment or two. If you want the sympathy of England, you must also learn to *give* your sympathy to her in return."

Passion is stronger than reason. My appeal fell upon deaf ears. Within two minutes, the conversation was back in the old rut of discontent. Never once, in talking to seven Zionists, was I told of one virtue, one success, or one kindness, in all the story of the British Mandate in the country. I became impatient and asked why this was so. I was told, in answer, that if I had come to Palestine before Lord Passfield issued his White Paper, I would have heard blessings being poured upon us. "But now, Lord Passfield, Sir John Chancellor, and a few others," said my informant, "have made the English taste like gall to the Jews."

I think this incessant complaining calls for deep understanding and compassion. For thousands of years, the Jews have struggled to hold their place in Western civilisation. They have struggled always and everywhere. Bound together by their suffering, dependent one upon the other for sustenance and sympathy, they have come to look upon the entire Christian world as a militant force, unrelenting,

cruel, bent upon destroying them. With the Jews, this defence against us is instinctive and not intellectual. And you are not going to remove an instinct in one generation. The Jews have had little cause for gratitude from the Christians for two thousand years. I believe that this accumulation of bitter experience has slowly drained the emotion of gratitude out of Jewish character. This may not be true of anglicised Jews. Indeed, it is *not* true. The anglicised Jew is but faintly Semitic, for he has been assimilated and accepted, honoured and respected, when he has assumed the yoke of British citizenship. Anglicised Jews have become great and good citizens.

I found no gratitude among the Jews in Palestine. It would have been pleasant, once or twice, to have been told that Britain has been faintly kind to them. I do not blame the Jews for this reluctance to speak kindly of us. I blame the whole history of Jewry in Europe, for it shows sufficient reason for the draining of gratitude out of their character.

It is simple and true that peasants who till the soil catch some divine essence from their husbandry : it seems to change their texture and make them different from all other men. They are never vulgar in thought or in manners. The man in the city sometimes describes them as Nature's gentlemen. The phrase is no more than a miserable attempt at saying that a man who works upon the land is nearer to God than any scholar who buries his pale nose in the Book of Moses. The young Jewish farmer may



offend the rabbi by smoking cigarettes on the Sabbath and by cutting off his orthodox curls. He may eat bacon and he may mar the corner of his beard. But, if you go out into the field to speak to him, he will look up from his furrow and his eyes will tell you that God has laid His hand upon him, in spite of the bacon and the cigarettes.

This young Jew is entirely different from all others in Palestine. I first met him and knew him when I spoke to the boy on the slope above Gideon's well. The young Zionist of the farms is the crown upon Zionism. He is the idealist, the dreamer who has dreamed a dream. But he is also willing to dig and work, to sow and plough, from dawn to sunset, to make his dream come true and to win Zion back for the Jews.

This young farmer never speaks to you of his moral achievement. He has no wish to elaborate the story of his coming from a struggling Russian village, to this fair valley of Sharon. He does not enjoy the breadth of his chest and tell you that he has done something which is brave. I do not think that he would do anything but blush at the suggestion that he has proved his character, through his fortitude.

There is another type of Zionist in Palestine. He acts as the showman for these young farmers, thriving in the city and taking you out into the countryside, so that he may say, "See, the new Jew ! He is bravely fighting against terrible odds. He is colonising Palestine. The Arabs shoot at him and



AN OPEN AIR SCHOOL IN THE VALE OF ESCHÆLON



they mutilate the Jewish women. His life is dangerous. See, even the Jews can take up ploughs to work upon the earth. But they can also take up rifles to defend themselves. The hazards of colonisation are not too much for them."

If the young farmer happens to be near by when this is said, he blushes, because such adulation is indecent to him. He knows, perhaps, that the hardships of his colonising are little or nothing compared with the story of pioneer life in Australia or Canada or New Zealand. He knows that such exaggeration on the part of his slick Jerusalem publicists is merely nonsense, making him appear as nothing more or less than ridiculous.

New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and South Africa were colonised with brave and bloody troubles. I have known old men who saw the Maoris walking across a New Zealand plain with the heads of their fellow-colonists stuck on the top of tall sticks, their blood dripping on to the brown shoulders below. The Black Hole of Calcutta, the story of Lucknow, the sinister delights of torture and cannibalism : the long agony of loneliness. These are the story of colonisation. The story is told in lonely sheds, upon the edge of unrelenting forest : not in four-roomed bungalows, with bathrooms, on the plain of Sharon. I would not belittle the achievement of the Zionist settlers. I would only ask that they do not confuse themselves with wrong labels. Compared with the record of pioneer life in Africa, Canada, and Australia, the story of the

Jewish settlement of Palestine is one of peace and ease. It is true that the Bedouins rise from their dark tents now and then, and ride down to raid a settlement. But telephones, wireless, bathrooms, and motor-cars, and nearness to European culture, oblige us to see the risks of life in Palestine in milder colours. The Zionists, in claiming kinship with the "brave colonists," must remember the very different purpose behind their conquest of the earth of Palestine. The Zionists have turned their backs upon European terrors to seek security. The British colonists turned from English security to seek terrors. The Jews went to Palestine to escape and to achieve. The Britons went to the Colonies as upon an adventure. If the security comes to the Jews too easily, Heaven help them. It is the quality of this struggle which will assure the character of the Jews of to-morrow. Dr. Arlosoroff himself told the Jewish Assembly that the movement was steeled in adversity. I believe that this adversity must be a hundred times more terrible before the Jews emerge as a people and before Palestine is established as a national home. When earth is bought, it is always sold again.

I met a charming and educated Arab a few hours after leaving the settlement of Sharon. He was a member of the Arab Executive Council. We talked for a long time and we came to a state of candour in which I was able to ask him to throw away his personal feelings, as far as possible, and to tell me what he thought of the Zionists and their chances of

achieving a national home. He answered, "The tendency to-day is to break down all national barriers. Therefore I believe that it is impossible for the Jews to fight the entire trend of modern life and build up a nation. A nation does not begin by being rich. It begins by being brave. It begins with war. National character is not made with money. Indeed, I think it is a treacherous sign when bounty is poured upon the poor Jews by the rich. The Jews must fight for their earth. It is not enough that they should buy it."

Then he directed me to a sentence in the Talmud *Pesachim* : "If you go to war, go not first but last, in order that you can return home first."

"With such teaching as this," added the Arab, "the Jew naturally prizes safety more than valour." He lifted a slim, olive hand and drew three of his fingers into a point. He illustrated all he said with little movements like this. "That is why America is not a nation. Until they have a war, they will not be a nation. A nation bound together by a war which it had won, could never permit the mistake of prohibition and the consequent rising of the criminal classes. In America, you have a rich aristocracy of criminals. Indeed, they are the only Americans who have a healthy, primitive instinct for war. But it has been perverted. The only safeguard against decadence is war. I am a man of the East and I can observe the West in a detached way. I believe, from my observation, that the Great War has been a boon to Europe. Your

character is stronger. You have more sense of personal responsibility and more sense of obligation to others than you had before the war. I knew many Englishmen before the war. They were in danger of being destroyed by their arrogance. Your adversity has saved you. Yes, the Jews might win and hold a national home if they fought for it. But I believe that the tendency towards breaking down of national barriers is too strong. Human nature, quick transport, the radio, the present state of Europe, which shows the nations as dependent upon one another—all these powers are too strong for it to be possible for the Jews to make one small country their own."

The Arab then made an interesting observation. He has been in England and he knows us well. "The Jews," he said, "have one great advantage over most people of to-day. What the individual in England, the individual in Europe, and, in fact, in most countries, seems to lack is a definite purpose. The Jews have a definite purpose in coming here. They are blind to the consequences of their purpose. But they *have* a purpose in their existence. And this, I think, is their great strength. For purpose begets character, and, whatever success or failure may come to them as farmers, I believe that their character will grow as the result of their work here. But this is confined to the farmers. I know many of them, and it is strange to me that there is such a difference between the Jews of the city and the Jews of the settlements. When I talk to a Jew in

Jerusalem, I know that he hates me. When I talk to a Jewish farmer, I do not feel this so intensely. Working on the land makes them too dependent upon human nature and too dependent upon their neighbours to wish us dead. Some do. Others know that they must try to live in peace with their neighbours. We like peace. We are a peaceful people. If the true story were told of the riots, England would be surprised. The Jews used the riots to awaken sympathy. They are great publicists. We have no publicity schemes. I think it is sad when people must employ professional publicists to awaken sympathy in other countries. This is foreign to Arab life, and we do not understand it."

I ventured a question, nervously. "You know," I said, "that the Jews claim sympathy and protection because there have been so many cases of rape of their women by Arabs. How are you going to reconcile two people with such vastly different codes of morality?"

His smile was indulgent and amused. "Rape has always been a good means of arousing anger among the English. When you started your war, the first charge brought against the German officers was that of rape. You built up a great idea of their wickedness. It was very good enlisting propaganda. The English will forgive all kinds of crimes. But their ideas about women are so noble that any suggestion of this kind arouses them to fury. The Jews know this. The stories are exaggerated and stupid. You must remember that our



women walk veiled in the streets and they lead protected lives, until they are married. The sight of laughing Jewish girls, with bare arms and free manners, has been disturbing for many young Arabs. To them, women are veiled, mysterious beings, shut away and guarded. Yes, there have been cases of rape. And we who care for the honour of the Arabs resent and regret this. But they have been exaggerated. I will say this. There have also been cases of Jews deserting their women and leaving them to be violated ; cases of Jews hiding in upstairs rooms and leaving their wives below, in the hope that the Arab would satisfy himself and pass on. That, to me, is a much more terrible crime."

I feel that I must qualify this statement made by my Arab friend. Cases of Jews deserting their women are rare : we could find their parallel in the records of invasions in our own history. If there have been such unfortunate instances of Jews deserting their wives, they are overshadowed by the story of the brave men and women who were killed as they knelt together at Hebron in 1919.

## IX

## RETURN TO GALILEE

*May*

I RETURNED to the house on the shores of Galilee last night. The love I have for this place is unreasonable and possessive. Although the garden is young, with new, stripling trees, it has all the qualities of earth which has been subdued and tended for many hundreds of years. I came down the drive, turning in from the road, to find that the flowers had changed while I was away. The jacarandas were out, high, wild, and blue, swaying against the sky. Only once have I seen them so full and rich : on a tree which used to hang over a garden wall in Madeira. When I came to the garden, I ran across the lawn, to the edge of the water. A boat-load of Arabs was passing, and they were singing a misty, intangible song. The calm of their singing, and the slowness of their movement, soothed me after the conflict of the past four days. They glided past, until they were swallowed up in the eucalyptus-trees that grow towards Capernaum. The pink oleanders had faded in the time I was away, but the white bushes had burst into full flower, and they stood upon the shore like twelve plump brides. But it is not in the flowers nor in the apparent beauty of Galilee that the wonder is found. It is something deeper and more satisfying than any sensation that

comes through the senses. I believe that the ruins of eleven cities lie buried beneath the calm coastline of the lake. The line of the shore is gentle, except where the opposite cliffs rise, golden and high. There is none of the vigour of a shore washed by sea-water, nor the fresh beauty of an English lake, or of a lake in a new country. The eleven cities seem to have left their imprint upon Galilee in some way, although there is not a vestige of their form, nor a sign of their location. To walk in a garden where Mary Magdalene walked as a child, to hear the music of my goatherd, still playing in the field, to feel the dramatic pressure of time upon one, of earth which is saturated with dead people, of earth which has swallowed cities at a gulp, earth which has yielded to the imprint of Jesus' feet as He walked past. Even if one has come back from Jerusalem trembling with doubts, even if a wave of bitter cynicism has swept over one, the story is still here. It makes no refreshed effort to win one back. One becomes part of it again. One melts again into the earth : the earth from which the jacarandas take their immaculate blue, the carnations their smell, and the oleanders their white rosettes. All beauty of the air and of moving things going down into the earth, the earth which is heavy with stories, beaten by centuries and generations, hewed once into the shape of cities and then, at a whim, scattered back into dust again.

Last night, when I went to bed, I could not sleep. We had sat beside the empty fireplace, with the

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curious instinct which draws English people to the hearth, even in countries of burning heat, where a fire would be ludicrous. H. had unfolded an idea to us. I had watched his eyes sparkling, like the eyes of a boy of ten. He had smoked his hookah, while G. played Wagner on her red gramophone. Sitting thus, we are lazy and contented together. I had chased strange beetles off the verandah and I had read the English newspapers.

As I lay in my bed, the waves of orange-sweet air, humid and burning, drifted into my bedroom, touching my face, like warm scented hands. Filling my nostrils and my mouth and almost choking me. It is too hot to stay beside Galilee any longer. In a day or two, every living thing must be scorched and baked to death, upon the ground. I thought I would suffocate, as I turned upon my pillow. I rose and, throwing on a dressing-gown over my pyjamas, I went out into the garden. The house might have been on fire, it was so hot as I walked through it. The moon spun its beauty in and out among the branches of the trees. It shone upon the water edge and it made a great path of silver across the lake. Next to the garden, perhaps a mile away, there is a minute Arab village. No more than five or six jumbled houses, small, dusty, and dark : beneath trees, and high, wild-flapping banana palms. I could see the dark smear of the village upon the lake shore, through the darkness. I sat upon the sea wall, the night heat burning on my face. I threw off my dressing-gown and pyjamas

and enjoyed the glow of the moonlight upon my own arms and shoulders. I stepped down to the pebbles and then I walked slowly into the water. It rose about me, softly, still warm from the sun. Its caress was gentle and physical. I walked far out, until I came to a place shrouded from the moonlight because of a high hill. I looked back and saw the shore, a finely pencilled line, between the moonlit water and the great dome of dark sky. Then I swam out into the light again and back to the shore pleased to see the moon after the mass of darkness and the eerie tricks of the shadows. At last I came to the shallow water again and I was able to crawl to the pebbles, on my hands, splashing my feet in the water behind me. Then I lay inert upon the shore. The water had refreshed me. It had cleaned away the feeling of having lived for a whole day. I was physically contented. But I am weighed down all the time with a sense of having failed to give myself sufficiently to understanding the Jews here. I have tried, forcing myself to degrees of patience which are not natural in me. Each time I meet a new Jew, I try to discard all sense of criticism and to understand him through the subtleties of human nature, through the passion which he pours into his cause. But I am soon estranged. The bitterness against the Arabs appals me. There is grim cruelty in their voices then, and I am defeated : back where I began.

While I was lying upon the shore, I heard rustling in the trees. I turned quickly and lay upon my

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stomach, searching the shadows with my eyes. Only a little time ago, an Arab was shot in the plantation. The garden is fearful and molesting upon a night like this, when the moonlight and the shadow lie, in alternate layers of light and dark. The jackals howl in the hills and the silence is filled with menace. In the daytime, there is peace. But at night there is cause for fear. I saw a form emerge from the end of the garden that leads to the Arab village. I rose and threw my dressing-gown over me. The figure came nearer, black and slow-moving. I could see the sharp line of his rifle against the sky. I moved up, on to the lawn. The man came nearer, and I could see that it was the night watchman. He had heard noises in the orange plantation. There had been no more than a scavenging jackal, but the watchman was wary. He is a Russian Jew. His belt bristled with cartridges. We stood on the shore for half an hour, talking and smoking cigarettes. Like most people who sleep in the daytime and who work and walk about at night, he spoke in a soft voice, and he was for ever peering into the dark, suspecting shadows and listening for noises.

He went away, up under the jacarandas, and left me alone. I tried to think of the experiences of the past few weeks and of my own failure to comprehend the truth about the Zionists. "You could never understand unless you were a Jew," one of them said to me, a few days ago in Jerusalem, when I confessed my despair to him. But there is no satisfaction in this. They have hurt me by their

metallic approach, their uncompromising candour. "We always say exactly what we think, you know," they declare, with a sort of cheeky bravado. But in doing so they estrange themselves from so much of the sympathy which might help their cause. They are so sadly bent upon observing where men are different, instead of making the more pleasant and creative discoveries of where men are the same.

Every day, I have been obliged to fight against the unconscious efforts of the Jews to estrange one from them. It is sad and curious to me that a people and cause which could thrive with more sympathy, make so many defences, so many deliberate efforts to lose the compassion which is offered to them. "It is the tragedy of Jewish character . . . they have no tact," an English friend has told me. "They ostracise themselves from their most impartial friends."

I think this is inseparable from a state of fanaticism. A few days ago, when I was in Jerusalem, I spoke to a Jewish nurse from Tel Aviv. I mentioned casually that I was sleepy and lethargic when I got up in the morning in Jerusalem. She answered me grimly, "You should go out each morning and shoot an Arab. That would stimulate you." Her eyes were so cold and her expression was so serious that I knew she meant what she said. That I was shocked did not matter to her. She could not understand that, for the next two days, I felt self-conscious when I was near her. In the end we saw each other through a miasma of hostility. If this hatred of the

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Arabs thrives, it will destroy the Zionists more than it will hurt the Arabs. The intelligent leaders and the farmers may be free from it, but in the rank and file of the Jews, it is rampant. Here is the kind of venom which hurts the hater far more than it hurts the object of his spite. The Zionists cannot eradicate the Arabs with bitterness, but they can destroy themselves. The effect of this obsession—this continual focusing of venomous feeling upon one object—is terrible to contemplate.

The Arab is not thus perpetually bitter. He sits back, lazily, and does not bother to think of enmity all day long. He is too much of a dreamer. To him, enmity is a luxury. With the Jew, it is a trade. True, when his temper is roused, the Arab's action is fiendish. He will commit murder and rape with a passion which is horrible. But he does not harbour his hatred so that it poisons his mind. He enjoys it, as caviare. To the Jew, enmity is daily bread.

I have tried again and again to induce an Arab to talk openly to me about his willingness to ravish Jewish women. One said to me, a few days before I left Jerusalem, "The Jew is a coward. A physical coward. In the riots, he put his women in one room whilst he hid in another, hoping that we would satisfy ourselves with them and leave him alive. He never came out in the open to fight. He used his women as a defence and, hiding in an upstairs room, he dropped bombs upon us and hoped that our savagery would be satisfied upon his women."

If this is true, the deepest wells of one's compassion



and understanding must be sounded before we pass any judgment upon the Jew. If he is a coward, it is because his character has been so sadly drained during the centuries of his isolation from society. He has had oppression to make him crafty. But he has had no home to give him pride, nor has he had conflict in battle to refresh his heroism. He has for so long grown as a separate human being that his sense of duty towards those near him has been warped.

In this expression of hatred, the Arab has the advantage over the Jew. The Arab sets out, and his temper is satiated with blood or rape. He returns home satisfied. The Jew hugs his anger, he sees it grow richer and richer within him. It is a long and unceasing pain. Until he learns how to conquer this obsession, his efforts will be prejudiced.

For the first few weeks I was angry. I am angry no more. The plight of the Jew, wrestling to become a citizen, awakens admiration, but also a sense of pathos before which one is dumb and ineffectual.

## THE LOAVES AND THE FISHES

*May*

IF one ventures beyond the garden, there are high hills to climb and, a few miles along the shore, the tranquil ruins and garden of Capernaum. I went there this morning, past the sloping field of yellow flowers. I picked seven different yellow blossoms within an acre, most of them daisies of various kinds : all so richly yellow that the hill was transformed by them.

Although there were many towns upon the shores of Galilee, Jesus paused in only one of them, when He came down here from Nazareth. He avoided Tiberias. It was at Capernaum that He stayed, to preach His first sermon. Now the stones have tumbled down : the ground is littered with ornaments and cornices, and in the centre of a grass plot there is an oil-press, older than the story of the Nazarene. I approached the tumbled stones and the garden past a field wild with poppies. They were so red that they obliterated the green of the grass. Past the gateway, I came upon the old priest who guards Capernaum, a gentle, whispering old man, living half way between the earth and the sky. Amid the heat and the thunder of the changes that are coming to Palestine, he remains calm. I do not think I have ever spoken to a man so completely

withdrawn from the stampede. Except once in Samoa, upon a Sunday when I walked back to the coast from Vailima.

I was young enough then to be saturated by the story of Stevenson and his island retreat. Every writer who touched the shores of Samoa had written about him. And I did not escape the fever. I had climbed Mount Væa, whereon he is buried. I had walked, as far away as possible, with a group of school-teachers who chattered about "R. L. S.," until I was tired of his name and of his death, against the background of warm tropical rain, falling upon the hibiscus and the water hyacinths. I came to the town again, which spreads along the bay. I remember that I saw a little Chinese coming out of a gate, with an enormous bundle of laundry upon his head. It was as wide as he was high and he ran along, looking like a colossal mushroom. I came to the gate which he had opened. It was set in a high stone wall, and within, swimming in the beauty of a sub-tropical garden, was a big, cool house. The gate was not completely closed, so I moved it and put one foot on to the path. I was discovered by an old priest who was bending over the edge of the garden with a trowel in his hand. He must have been eighty years old. He stood up and said, "Would you like to come and see my garden?"

I went in, and he took me in and out among the twisted, multi-coloured shrubs. The garden had all the beauty of plants that grow a little too quickly

and disobediently for the amount of labour expended upon them. The priest was an Italian, and he had lived in the South Seas for sixty years. His hands moved slowly : they were brown and fine and crinkled. His eyes did not move when he spoke. They were so calm and so old that, when I looked at them, I relaxed. We live in perpetual fear of eyes. They penetrate us and examine us. The consciousness of being criticised comes from observing the eyes of those we meet. But there was no criticism in the old priest's eyes. He took me into his house, a cool, simple place, with no decoration except a gay table-cover. Upon this he put a bottle of wine and two glasses. I sank into a deep chair and, being no more than twenty then, I unburdened myself of a tangle of motives which had troubled me. It was about the time of the end of the war, and I had been in a New Zealand training camp for more than a year. It had embittered and disturbed me. That is all past now, but I do remember the dear and gentle man leaning towards me and saying, " You must not worry too much about God. If your consciousness of Him is confused, do not let it trouble you. It will all come right in time. When I came here, sixty years ago, I was as confused as you are, my boy. And in all those sixty years I have learned only one truth. That I must give myself, mentally, physically, and spiritually, to my neighbour. Until I learned that, I had no peace within myself. When that stillness came within me, I realised God. But not until then."

He smiled, and the old eyes lit up for a second. "Drink your wine," he said, "and let us walk in the garden. Or I might venture out, if you will walk with me. I am too old to go alone now."

We walked along the sea-front, the gentle wind blowing his cassock out in a balloon behind him. His little, bent body leaned upon my arm. I do not know why it is, but I am conscious of his weight on my arm to this day. It was the first time I was ever aware of being necessary to somebody else. I had always searched in the wilderness of people for somebody to help *me*.

I recalled the day to the priest, as I walked with him at Capernaum. We leaned against the wine-press, looking out, between the trees, to the water of Galilee. I told him of the conflict within me, of my wish to understand the Jews and also to understand the Arabs. "I would not try to understand," he said. "It is a conflict. And conflict is the enemy of understanding. You must learn to be quiet and alone. The time that matters is the time you spend with yourself."

It was peaceful to talk with him there, where Jesus first spoke to the people. Some of my damp, grey disillusionment left me and I was able to go back along the road, towards the Zionists, with more confidence, less suspicion and resentment. One is often betrayed only because one is suspicious. One is often discontented only because one has expected too much of other people and not enough of oneself.

## THE LOAVES AND THE FISHES

I walked back by the low road, which was new to me. I came to an open place, guarded upon one side by the hill of yellow flowers, refreshed upon the other by the sight and the air of the lake. Beside the road, two men were bent over a flat piece of earth. One wore a sun-helmet. The other was a tall, dark Arab, and he was washing a stone. I knew that, somewhere near this place, was the ground upon which Jesus was said to have performed the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. I left the road and walked down to watch them at work. I came upon a remarkable sight. The ground was covered by wonderful mosaics, and at one end was the ruin of an altar. The man in the helmet was a German archæologist, and I had happened upon him just as he was unearthing the Church of the Loaves and the Fishes, lost in an earthquake long ago. The roof and most of the walls had been scattered, but the floor was almost perfect, and, sheltered by the lower stones of an altar, was the stone upon which Our Lord is supposed to have rested the loaves and the fishes before He multiplied them. The rough rock is said to have been placed beneath the altar in the fourth century. It is known that, in the year 380, St. Sylvia passed this way upon her pilgrimage, and that she wrote of the Church of the Loaves and Fishes and also of the holy stone. Thus far they are authentic.

Most of the patterns of the mosaic floor were washed clean. Behind the altar was a design of two fishes, guarding a basket of loaves. The floor was

of fourth-century mosaic, but where there were sixth-century restorations, the craftsmanship and design were still simple and beautiful. The main panel of mosaic was about twenty-eight feet long and sixteen feet wide, and upon this was a free and beautifully coloured design of oleanders, lotus lilies, flamingoes, snakes, and ducks.

The young archæologist showed me the details of his find with exciting affection. I have known the pleasure of working among old letters, of discovering the life of a dead and almost forgotten man, reading the yellow, brittle sheets of his letters to gather his story together. It is an excitement that can never be understood by those who look upon antiquarians and historians as musty bores. One can enjoy a thrill of excitement in discovering a fact in an old letter as other people may enjoy in a romance or in gambling. The emotion is just as simple and just as human. The sensation of standing upon the mosaic floor near Capernaum was much the same . . . bending down to rub a little patch of design with a wet handkerchief, discovering part of a rich, purple-breasted bird, a patch of blue—almost translucent blue, which had not lost its beauty after being buried beneath the mud and rubble of an earthquake, for centuries.

I looked up . . . towards the yellow hill, and I saw an English figure, wearing plus fours, shooting at a quail. Thank heaven he missed it. The flying-boat from Athens was floating upon the water. Motor-cars, bursting with tourists and luggage, were

screaming and rattling along the road which runs into Tiberias.

I went back to my garden.

No doubt it will not be very long before the shrine becomes one with all the others in this sad country. The tourist agents have already painted bedroom numbers over the Roman caves at Petra. You can book your tomb, just as you can book your seat for Wimbledon or your stall for Oberammergau. When I was in Australia, a man was selling seats in a stadium he had built for the second coming of Jesus. And he sold them to apparently reasonable people. In Palestine, they cannot leave any holy place alone. Every supposed tomb is so labelled and framed and noted that one only wishes to run away from it. The countryside between these memorials is beautiful. The hill where Saul was slain, the lakeside where Mary Magdalene was born, the spring where Gideon tested his soldiers . . . these are still beautiful, because nobody has found a definite stone or corner which can be labelled and described in a guide-book. These stories belong vaguely to the earth, and they mean something only to those who do not need to see everything authenticated, described, and photographed.

### *On the Mount of Olives*

I took my English letters to the Mount of Olives this morning, with my pen and paper, to temper the task of answering them with the help of the



sunshine and the sight of the city, against the sky. My letters included three pieces of news which made me lie back against the hill and laugh with as much hard cynicism as I have ever mustered in my life. The first was from a friend in America, announcing a new song, "Tune in with God and don't be lonesome here below."

The second was from Rome. Here it is :

*A lift that vanishes through the ceiling of St. Peter's is the very latest addition to the many structural alterations which have been made in the Vatican and St. Peter's during the last three years. The lift is for the exclusive use of the Pope. . . . After the Pope has left the lift, an attendant will press an electric button when both lift and steel shaft will disappear through the ceiling. . . .*

My third shred of news, is gossip, overheard on the steps of the new Cathedral in Johannesburg. Two women have walked out of the Cathedral and this is the conversation overheard by my friend :

*1st woman : " My dear, did you see that the alms bag was handed to me by a native ? "*

*2nd woman : " Well, you do not mind a native handing you your vegetables, do you ? "*

*1st woman : " That is different. I call it damnable."*

*2nd woman : " Do you think that God would like to hear you talking like that ? "*

*1st woman : " It's not what God wants to hear. It's what he's going to hear."*

So it is that, while the Christians are pressing in to see the Virgin's Tomb and while the American

*THE LOAVES AND THE FISHES*

tourists are tramping along the shores of Galilee and while the big million dollar Y.M.C.A. is "nearing completion" upon the hill, and while the Pope is going to Mass in a lift, there is laughter on the Mount of Olives and, I wouldn't be surprised, the ghost of a smile in Heaven.

## TO PETRA

*May*

WE left Jerusalem at daybreak, to climb down to the Dead Sea and to Jericho. From the uncertain stirring of morning life, with the first Arabs creeping out of their houses, down the road past the Inn of the Good Samaritan, to the incredible salt water, the rattling husks of the apples of Sodom, the parched, insipid valley. We came upon one gay creature, a mile or so after we passed the Inn of the Good Samaritan. He was a bedecked and gloriously coloured Arab, with his retinue. He seemed to be evil and rich. Gay enough to have been one of the Princes of Gomorrah, risen from his sleep beneath the Dead Sea, and setting out upon his dark business again. After he had climbed out of our sight, towards Jerusalem, we saw nobody. Down and down we travelled, until we came to the dusty, forlorn basement of the world.

We moved across the plain and came to the Jordan. For a brief mile or two, the Jordan refreshed the earth and made Milton's "vale of Eleale, clad with vines." The sun burned magnificently, torturing our eyes. Upon the Allenby Bridge which spans the Jordan, there was a little life ; two slow bodied officials came out to see our papers. While they examined the car, we drowsed

upon the parapet beside the road. With us was a smiling English servant who must be hidden behind the initial of S. He has been engaged to be married for four years. He asked us, wistfully, if he might take a bottle of Jordan water home, to christen his unborn children. "It only takes a few drops," he said. Nevertheless he filled a big beer bottle from the river and hugged it with dreamy intensity as we moved away from the hot valley.

In one place, where a few trees were brave enough to defy the parched earth, we came upon a camp : several small tents and two so grand and big that they might have been snatched from an English garden-party. It was the camp of the Amir Abdullah, ruler of Trans-Jordan. We paused and announced ourselves and, within one of the tents, lined with yellow, dominated by an incongruous telephone, we waited for the Prince. It was strange to sit thus, waiting for the descendant of Mohammad, the son of the brave and beloved King Hussein, with the unending desert beyond and one ominous telephone, reminding us, against our will, of the world outside.

The Amir came into the tent and we sat down to drink tea with him. I understood nothing of what he said, but to watch his beautiful hands and his humorous eyes was enough to tell me of his qualities. We talked of the besetting sin of extravagance, through the interpreter, and we all agreed that it was the most pleasant sin allowed to us by an indulgent God. I pointed out to the Amir that our coins

were made round so that they could roll away. "Ah yes," he said. "But now you make your money of paper so that it simply flies away."

Later in the day we passed the Amir's palace, in Amman. It is big and it crowns a hill. But I like to think of the Amir sitting in his yellow tent, out in the desert which he rules, discovering with him our mutual sin of extravagance, in spite of the barrier of not being able to understand one word of what he said to me.

Towards noon we came to Amman, a cluster of Arab houses, rising and falling about a central hill. Here again was the hot bustling, the nervousness of the Arab life. Some crowded into the little shops, some harangued their neighbours in high, eunuch voices. They scuttled in front of the motor-car, they observed us strangely. Some sat in the opaque, smoky atmosphere of the coffee-shops, with their hubble-bubbles, sucking at them, in half sleep. They peered out of the dusk, like monstrous fish peering out of the water of an aquarium. We paused in Amman to buy food. Bread, oranges, and a lemon squeezer. The squeezer was my idea. Then out into the desert again, with the yellow dust ballooning in our wake. Sometimes there were bedraggled Bedouin tents, woven from goat-hair stretched upon sparse frames and looking like great brown bats, settled upon the sand. Within them, the Bedouin women squatted, their litters of impersonal, unwashed children scrambling for food or crawling over the befouled earth. Once a little

vixen of a child crawled near to the car and looked up at us, with enormous black eyes.

The space was so great, the endless sand, the undulating, expressionless span, that the tents were soon lost again. They were no more than specks of animation in the inviolate stillness. Mile after mile we crawled on. Sometimes a line of stately camels padded over the sand, but they were too superior and confident to be disturbed by our vulgar bedlam of dust and noise. Every hour we came upon a water reservoir. Beside one of these we paused and unpacked our food. The ground about the reservoir seemed to be deserted at first, but, like dust gnomes, the Arabs emerged from the earth and gathered around us. Their beasts were lapping the water. The reservoir was so wide that the water was beaten up into little storms by the wind.

There were six Arabs, dour, silent, and dirty. They came nearer and closed about us in a circle. One was a swashbuckling fellow, with a grand horse. It was ornamented and heavy with tassels. The Arab looked like a wily little devil. He might well have jumped up from Hell. His stomach and chest were clattering and glittering with weapons. His bandolier and belt bristled with cartridges. But I liked him. The others were puny. He had all the air of a Casanova, who would use his weapons in an eternal conquest of reluctant women. An *amoroso* of the desert, a devotee of cuckoldry and wickedness. In brief, he was dressed up to kill. His lips were thin, perhaps cruel. But there was a pleasant

enough glint in his eyes and I set about making him smile. For I was certain that his only two occupations were cuckoldry and laughing, without compromise. He glowered at us at first. His stomacher of knives and cartridges looked treacherous. I waved my hands a little ostentatiously, to show him I was rather a grand fellow too. Then I found the lemon squeezer in the jumble of luggage and I held it up, shining, before his wondering eyes. I cut three oranges in halves and pressed them on the squeezer. Thus I made him a tumbler of orange-juice. The dust whirled in from the desert so that I had to shield the precious glass with my Arab headdress. I gave it to him, smiling, and looking direct into his eyes. They softened a little as he raised the tumbler to his lips. With simple pantomime, I indicated my respect for his weapons, my fear, my mock humility before such magnificence. He smiled. Then he handed me his rifle, which, I pretended, was much too heavy for me. I played my last card. Through the driver, I told him that I had heard that he was the greatest horseman between Ma'an and Amman. That he was a whirlwind. I begged him to show me how splendidly he could leap upon his horse. Then he swelled his chest, so that the knives jingled. His body took on a boastful and self-confident air. He leapt upon his horse, in a whirl of flying garments and flashing knives. Upon his saddle, he turned and laughed, radiant. My friend! I applauded him and L. photographed him. We pressed pineapple and

bread into his hands and then we sat down to lunch.

After lying back upon our rugs for a brief sleep, under the protection of the wild young Arab, who would not leave us, we set out again into the dust. Each hour we came upon a lonely station, clinging to its reservoir of water. In each wind-beaten little house, a member of the Arab Legion watched our coming and our going. From station to station, across the parched desert, we were observed and protected. Telephones, which we never suspected, passed our names on from one station to the next. In between lay the monotony of sand. Sometimes a herd of gazelles, æry as birds in flight, fled across the desert from us, until their colour melted into the dun shadows. The fine dust piled itself up against the windows of the car until we could not see. It was sticky dust, and it clung to the glass so that we had to stop almost every half hour and clean the windows, to be able to see again. But the scene never changed. The dust penetrated every corner of our clothes. It lay thick upon everything. As evening came, we saw a mountain ridge on the skyline. At last, we reached the selvage of the gaunt stone. The wind and storms of centuries had tormented the shoulders of rock. Deep chasms were cut in its sides, lifeless, cruel, opposing the desert which gnawed into its foundations.

Whatever vestiges of life there were upon the desert, the line of sand meeting sky was seldom broken. Only once I saw a speck moving against



the horizon. We moved towards each other, and it assumed bulk and movement. Lumbering, quick, magnificently strong, an armoured car pulled up in front of us. A corporal leapt out of its steel belly and confronted me. He was as English as the white cliffs of Dover. "I have a letter for Mr. Bolitho," he said. And there it was, in his hand, a hundred miles from anywhere, in the heart of the desert. It was addressed to me, "Somewhere in Trans-Jordan." The letter welcomed us to Ma'an, which we were to reach in the evening.

The corporal leapt back into the armoured car. It snorted and kicked up a fierce dust and then moved on and left us, to travel over the last hundred miles to Ma'an.

Now and then we came upon the railway line, a higgledy-piggledy, single set of rails along which the plodding train creeps to Ma'an once a week. Sometimes, impatient of this effort to subdue it, the desert moves, in a fine attempt at self-assertion. Then the gimcrack lines are buried, and they must be dug bare again before the train can pass. Even if the railway line is a ribbon of communication across the sand, binding one town to another, it only makes the desert seem to be more dreary and forlorn. The train would not dare to move along such a line *bravely*. It would creep, *nervously*. For almost twelve hours we had been travelling, a writhing mass of dust, moving across the face of Trans-Jordan. Evening came, and the gold melted out of the sand. The light withdrew from the sky,

and we travelled over the last miles in the half dark. We could see the vultures, sharp-winged and vicious, cutting their way through the thickening darkness—the thickening black which seemed to be saturated with fear and danger.

I would not have felt so confident of the powers of my lemon squeezer over the wily little Bedouin now, had he swum in upon us out of the darkness.

L. lay back in her corner, her kafiah falling away from her tired, dusty face. It is not easy to find somebody with whom one can bear fifteen hours in a hot motor-car, crossing a desert. Only once, through the tedious day, had we chafed at a word. I had forgiven her for laughing at the lemon squeezer, but when she pounced upon me for describing the grim mountain as “beautiful,” I was rattled.

“It is interesting,” she had said. “But it is not beautiful.”

“It is beautiful,” I insisted.

“It is interesting,” she answered.

I compromised with, “It has character.”

But she only turned and stared out of her window at the sand. Independence in women annoys me sometimes. My hope lay in my medicine-chest. I had talked to a nurse in Jerusalem, making a list of every possible medicine which might be needed in a desert. I had brought no less than twenty-four bottles and packets. There were splints as well. If only she could be just a *little* ill, to allow me to justify myself. Perhaps a scratch,

enough to open a bottle and yet not enough to cause distress. Perhaps a bruise, so that I could turn, like a conjurer, to my medicine-chest and bring out the iodine.

She continued to stare out of the window at the sand.

"Have you got a headache?" I asked hopefully.

"No," she answered.

"People do have headaches in cars, you know. It has been a terrible day. You *must* be tired."

"No, I have never felt better in my life."

So I closed the lid of my medicine-chest again. It was opened only once during all the journey to and from Petra. A lusty R.A.F. officer grazed his knee outside the cave at Petra and I was allowed to dab a little iodine on him. Otherwise, my twenty-four bottles and my splints came back to Jerusalem unused and unopened.

After eight o'clock, we peered out through the blackness and saw a form upon the skyline. A form which was blacker than the night. "The trees of Ma'an," said the driver. He was the Arab owner of the Olivet Hotel in Jerusalem, a fine figure of a man, in a gilded kafiah given to him by Lawrence, whom he served.

We came to the little town, a frightened conglomeration of buildings, isolated in the desert. A minute hotel, barracks for the Air Force and for the Frontier Force, and then, mostly leading towards the incongruous plantation of trees, a few streets of frail houses which might be tossed into

## TO PETRA

the air at any time, like dice, in the hands of the wind.

At last a door opened. Aching, blinded by the dust, I went into a room. A tall, military figure stood up from a chair. The face which smiled was good looking and kind. "Have a whiskey and soda," he said. And then his wife came into the room. Her face was glowing with kindness. I prepared to shake the dust out of my brain and to be polite. "No, don't bother about being polite. Have a hot bath instead." Never was there such a sensible saint. So I beat the water into bubbles and turned over and over in it. I ate a great dinner and I slept well, for next morning we were to start for Petra.

### *Ma'an*

### *May*

While I was in Ma'an, I lived at the R.A.F. mess. It is built away from the town. The bedrooms look out upon a border of bamboos and spring onions ; the hangars and garages are filled with aeroplanes and armoured cars ; the surrounding desert is made formidable with wire entanglements and clever traps for rebellious Arabs. Here are the fine elements of government. Every now and then, the armoured car becomes restive in its garage. It snorts and emerges into the sunlight, and then it hurtles off into the desert. The sharp-eyed Bedouin in his tent, peers out and marks its passing, its power, and its machine-gun. His savagery is curbed. He knows that with a twist of the hand and a little

adjustment, the man inside could riddle him with so many holes that the wind would whistle through his stomach.

We are imposing our western idea of law and order upon a people who are as much raiders by nature as we are shopkeepers. Their character has grown out of their parched mountains and their unending deserts. Slowly, they will wilt under our law and they will desert the more noble business of raiding over their borders for the degrading jobs they may find in the westernised towns. By what moral right we should impose this law upon them, I do not know. I cannot feel that raiding in the desert is in any way as immoral as politics or finance.

We are so certain of our Western civilisation. The Briton in the Near East seldom pauses to remember that many other civilisations have attempted what we are attempting. There is a grim lesson in Amman, where a dull, modern hotel stares across the road, impudently, at the ruins of a Roman Theatre. The Romans and the Greeks failed and I do not see that we have a greater right to succeed. If our civilisation can breed a hell like the war and a tyranny like that of Hitler over the Jews, then we might look to our own moral impulses as a people. We might ask by what right we police the Arabs, whose raids upon their neighbours are far more natural and less immoral than the raids made in Europe to-day against personal freedom.

The Bedouins will certainly wither under the order we impose upon them. They will allow

their Arab chargers to grow fat and lazy. They will dress their wives in geegaws. In the meantime, the Bedouin who leaned out of his tent to watch the armoured car pass by, leans out again, to find the reason for a strange whirring sound in the air. A few minutes before, the hangar doors at Ma'an opened and an aeroplane came out. It paused on the edge of the desert; two mechanics, sweating, scantily covered by shorts and open shirts, ran off from the propeller, in a whirl of dust and stink, and then, gracefully as a bird, venomous as a devil, the aeroplane ascended into the blue sky above Trans-Jordan. When the Bedouin pauses, in mending a hole in his tent, he looks out and sees the monster. He retreats into the tent again and shakes his head. He knows that if the notion came to the little speck of an Englishman in the aeroplane, he could drop a bomb upon his shaky, goat-hair tent and blow it to atoms. The Bedouin conjures up a picture of himself and his family scattered into fragments of flesh and bone over an acre of desert. He shudders and makes pledges to behave himself.

Isolated in this way from all outside influences, remote, so that England is an echo, a shade, far over the edge of the desert, the men in the Royal Air Force flourish in character and body. I have never been more contented and amused than I was on the evening I spent with the non-commissioned officers of the R.A.F. at Ma'an. After dinner, I went with the two officers to the N.C.O.s'

mess. We drank beer ; we told bawdy stories ; we talked sentimentally about England and imagined all kinds of affections we were much too independent to feel. No more than that. The beer was in long glasses, and at the third pint, one was able to laugh at the sudden disappearance of the sergeant, and to laugh still more when the corporal said, " He's gone out to tie the dog up," and still more when the sergeant-major said, " He was never a good container, was Joe." And then there were the sergeant-major's cigars, which he smoked with mayoral pomp. Not very funny, you say ! *Everything* is fun when you are sitting in a smoke-filled room in Ma'an, a struggling speck of civilisation in the desert, with eight or ten young Britons who have never heard of Hillel but who have learned to practise and live his teaching.

### *Later*

Again and again I went to the N.C.O.s' mess while I was in Ma'an. I have drunk glasses of beer in most of the countries of the world. I believe in beer, more than I believe in ink. Wars are made by clever men, sitting over inkwells. Peace is maintained by happy men, sitting over mugs of beer. Whether it is in a small German village, nestling on the slopes of Augustusburg or on the fringe of the Australian bush : in a Sussex village or in the Ratskeller in Bremen, you will find that men are made more lenient and friendly, less haughty and less suspicious when they smile at you over a glass of beer. But

put a pen in their hands and their expressions will change. If politicians were given beer mugs instead of inkwells, they might come to some kind of understanding of men and the motives that inspire them.

It was over glasses of beer that I made my friends in Ma'an. They were officers and N.C.O.s of the R.A.F., drawn from most corners of the United Kingdom. I have never known people more happy, less selfish, less class conscious and less irritable. I do not know enough of the services to say how rare this is. But I have never felt the spirit of unsentimental comradeship so pleasantly. Officers and N.C.O.s and men seemed to live in mutual dependence : they seemed to be as necessary one to the other as limbs growing from one body.

At night I lie in my bed, listening to the faint rustle of the bamboos outside, listening also to a voice, from the mess or near by, singing :

*Look at the flowers, bloody great orchids,  
Lilies white and roses red.  
Bloody good money, bloody well wasted,  
Ain't it grand to be bloody well dead ?  
Look at the coffin, bloody great handles,  
Made of oak and lined with lead.  
Look at the black hearse, bloody great horses,  
Ain't it grand to be bloody well dead ?*

One sees the character of the men growing and blossoming under the warmth of the Trans-Jordan sun. They have no amusements but those they



make for themselves. Beyond the cluster of frail buildings in which they live is nothing but the village of Ma'an and then the infinity of the desert. With a ludo board, a ping pong table and a barrel of beer, they create their own paradise. It is thrilling to observe them at their work : it is perpetually exciting to be allowed to join them in their leisure and find, sitting beside one, a sergeant who breaks through his shyness to reveal a philosopher : a corporal who reads, making his own way through literature, guided by his own taste, enslaved by no conventions of other men's judgment, brave enough to say that he thinks only one in ten of Kipling's poems to be great and discriminating enough to have found Francis Cornford's poems by himself, because of one or two verses he chanced upon in the *Week-End Book*.

I think I saw the R.A.F. man true to life yesterday, when I went down to the post office for my letters. There is only one shaking train a week, bringing the letters down across the desert, from Jerusalem. Its arrival is the occasion of the week. I was leaving the post office with my letters when an R.A.F. driver, with the good name of Jones, came up and offered to take me back in his lorry. I swung up on the front seat of the enormous vehicle and we rattled over the desert. As we were crossing a dark strip of sand, on the edge of the village, we came upon a lame Arab boy who was going our way. Jones stopped the lorry and asked the boy if he would like a ride. But that was not all. Jones jumped down

and lifted the youngster up into the back of the lorry. Is it sentimental for me to see some deep influence in these things? Is it foolish for me to feel that the isolation of this life in the desert brings out the positive and yet tender qualities of character in a way that life in England could never do?

One evening when I went up to the mess, I sat next to a corporal for a long time before he spoke. He was a big fellow, strong, with a deep voice and dark eyes. He was the driver of an armoured car. Just before I left him, over the fifth pint of beer, he said, "Would you like to see the sunrise over the desert? I must test a car in the morning and you can come with me: but you must leave before five o'clock." Before daybreak, I was on the verandah smelling the border of spring onions, waiting for the armoured car. It drew up in front of me, with the precision of a London taxicab. I know nothing about motor-cars and less about warfare, so the gross, dangerous monster was an object of magic to me. I was shut into a case of metal, with a slim opening in front of me. In this the desert was framed. Interminable dust, still grey and indefinite in the changing light. I clung to every available support as the car crashed forward. I was a Jonah in a steel whale, a die in a box. I soon forgot the metal contraptions around me. Next to me sat the corporal, excited, it seemed, at the sensation of driving. Speed thrilled him. We flew over the sand to the yellowing horizon. Fifteen miles out into the desert, we stopped. Craning forward, we watched the golden rim of the desert.

The light spread like a liquid, mile upon mile, until lively shapes began to form upon it, a phantasmagoria of golden imps, prancing ludicrously. The centre of the changing scene took on a deeper hue. Flame burst through the yellow light ; the sun, big, gorgeous, and red, with a diadem of amber points. It rose, and in a twinkling the desert woke up. Every grain of sand was lighted, every miserable tussock burst into flower, every slumbering, living thing stirred and rejoiced. The birds rose to the sky. I turned and looked at the airman next to me. He shared the beauty of the desert. He too seemed to be radiant with the sensations of the dawn. From living upon the desert so long, he seemed to be part of it. Like bushmen who seem to belong to trees, as fishermen belong to the eternal battle between rock and water, the soldier seemed to belong to the broad, simple lines and colours of his habitation, upon the edge of the desert. He turned the car, and we travelled back to the barracks. Within an hour or so, I was on the way to Petra.

# THE WALL OF ROCK

*May*

I HAVE a friend whose three loves are Wagner and mountains and his garden. It was his dream (and I shared the realisation of it with him) to play his gramophone in Skye, with the fierce phrases of the Fire music passing up the noble slopes of the Cueillans. "Valhalla," he said, as we came to the mountains. My memory spins away from Petra for a moment and I recall the day in Skye. We had been to Dunvegan, and we had met Macleod. We had been to his castle, a Tristan's castle, and we had seen the fairy flag which, it is believed, was given to an early Macleod by the little people, to save the clan from disaster. A wretched and knowing man from the Kensington Museum has proved the flag to be a Saracen shawl. Nevertheless, the flag is upon the Macleod wall. Here in Dunvegan Castle, and upon the slopes of the Cueillans, I shall always find the scenes of Wagner's stories.

The mountain face of Petra was also Valhalla. Perhaps it is only the scenery of Covent Garden, with the final suffusion of fire, that makes one conjure up the conventional similes, when one sees high, gaunt mountains. When I lived in New Zealand, my conception of Valhalla was different. The lofty, white mountains gave me a different vision from

that of Wagnerites who have been born near to grim, European peaks.

We saw the mountains which guard Petra as a melodramatic, dusky range, cruel and deathly. There was power in them, but no beauty. They rose abruptly from the desert and they pierced the sky.

We came to their feet and found a fissure cut into the tall rock face. It was narrow, so that our ponies proceeded in Indian file. It was high, so that the ribbon of blue sky was narrow and far away. We rode forward slowly, down a cool arcade of red stone. It wound and it descended, but it was for ever narrow and solitary, and its acoustics were unnatural and startling. Sometimes an oleander swept the flanks of the pony. Once we came upon a grove of them, in a wide place, and again the scent filled me and saturated me with ecstasy. Perhaps half an hour passed before we came to the first, stalwart pillars, cut out of the rock. Then on, past the cracked and tumbled theatre, over pebbled waterways, in and out among stubble and into a final, open valley by which we approached the central basin of Petra. The sunlight fell, uninterrupted by cloud or promontory. The colossal bowl of red stone burned. At the far end of the level ground were the last, brave columns of a temple rising from the ruins of stone and a tangle of weeds and flowers. Every inch of the red cliff face caught the sunlight and played with it, throwing it off again in waves of quivering heat.



THE TUNNEL OF ROCK LEADING TO PETRA



The only coolness was in the caves, dug into the perpendicular rock, some big and ornamented, with fine pillars supporting their entrances : some small and humble, all yawning, exposing their cool, deep throats. Herein were buried the splendid and the brave. In the dimness of some other time, the red valley buzzed with life—princes and soldiers and slaves, amorous, brave, and obedient, filling the valley of Petra with all the vigours of human existence. Now, if the dark silences of the caves are disturbed at all, it is only by a little Bedouin or two, living sparsely upon a sparse land, goatherds and crafty fellows, scampering upon the ruins of Petra's glory, like rats scampering among the forsaken litter of a rich man's feast.

We crossed the plain, still imprisoned by the walls of red stone. On one side we came upon a rough hewn staircase, climbing from the dust and pebble bed of a dead stream, to the caves. In one of these, about one hundred and fifty feet above the plain, we pitched our bags, our rugs, and our water-bottles and then we went out, to stand upon the platform of rock which was our verandah ; our eyrie, from which we could observe every colour and every movement in the plain and upon the cliffs about us. But there was no movement. It was as if, bored by the succession of civilisations, the valley had ceased to bother any more about being animated. The streams had run for thousands of years. The leaves had rustled for a hundred generations. It was time to remain still, to pause for



breath. The pink-paper oleanders were stiff, upon wire. There were no birds, no winds to stir the shrubs or to disturb the hot death which was upon everything.

In the afternoon, we scrambled from the lowland of flowers up to the mountains. They were silent and remote, nearer to the death of the caves than to the energy of ourselves. Tombs and caves and a temple, carved out of the solid stone, seemed almost ludicrous. The tremendous and brutal lines of the mountain edges overpowered the efforts at decoration. One was tempted to shock those who "love" Petra by wishing that it had been left as God made it. One's eye jumps from the charm of cornices, the satisfying proportions of any arch or the slim beauty of pillars, to the violence of the mountains from which they have been carved. The result is disturbing. The Arabs were nimble: they took us along ledges of rock so narrow and so high that the bile rose in me as I observed the thousand feet of rock face which fell away from the edge of my shoe.

In the evening, we came back to the cave again and we sat upon the edge of our stone platform: we felt the evening coolness upon our cheeks and we observed the slow growing of the night.

The sun burned for a second upon the edge of the cliff, and then it tumbled down into the valley beyond. Like boys escaped from their master's vigilance, the sprites of the valley came to life again. The trees moved, with the soft fingers of the evening wind fumbling among their leaves. The oleanders,

## THE WALL OF ROCK

satiated with the heat they had drunk in all day long, poured it out again, heavy with scent.

Far away across the valley, through the one visible fissure, a new Arab soldier appeared: he was coming to guard us during the night. He trotted on his pony, growing bigger and assuming the details of nearness. He stopped at the foot of the stone steps, tethered his pony, and climbed up to us. There were three of them now, in a circle upon the ledge of rock, spreading their blankets and cutting their bread, with sheath-knives which they wore at their belts.

The platform of rock in front of our sleeping-cave narrowed at one end and then it ran, in a slim ledge, around the rock face, to unknown altitudes. It was upon this ledge that the policemen had spread themselves. When they had eaten their meal, they went down into the valley again and returned with great masses of dead oleander wood. It was thrown together in a pile, six feet high. New bundles were brought up, and these were piled at a distance, near enough to feed the central fire during the night. A few languid vultures soared overhead and dipped down to the bushes beyond the temple. They flew slowly, as if their crops were full of good eating. The last light faded from the plain and darkness came, impenetrable, alive with little noises and heavy with scent.

We ate our meal. The lemon squeezer struck wonder to the men of the Arab Legion. They watched me as I pressed the half oranges down

upon it, turning them round and round. They watched the final glass, full of juice, with the solemn expression of worshippers before a holy mystery. When the food was put away, we spread the blankets upon the rock ledge and searched the darkness, the vast black depth below us, the vast black wall in front of us. The Arabs lit the fire and the dry oleander stalks burst into pink flower again. Crackling, laughing fire. The higher fangs of flame leapt up, until the immediate scene was bathed in rose light—the faces of the Arabs shining. L.'s kafiah thrown white upon the stone ; the limbs, the hands, the white paper of the open cigarette box : all dyed with cochineal.

From the valley there came a faint but definite sound. It was the reed flute of Galilee again, sending one fine string of notes rippling through the black valley. "The goatherd, coming home. He is late," said the Arab who was near to me. I leaned over the edge of the stone and looked down, but I could see no form or movement.

"Go and ask him to come and play to us," I asked. So the policeman rose from his blanket and disappeared down the steps. He soon came back again, followed by a wisp of a boy, afraid, trembling on the edge of the oleander light. I rose and went to him. I gave him some herrings in tomato sauce, and when he had eaten them, digging his brown sticks of fingers into the sop, he sat down and leaned against the rock. Then I asked him to play. His shyness passed. He lifted the reed flute to his lips,

and again the sad notes of Galilee cast their spell over me. Lying thus, with every object ornamented by the fire, every world noise dead, every face dim to me, listening to the goatherd's song, I reached the sweet agony of final beauty. It brought a peace in which there was no thought. Only the drowsiness of complete sacrifice to the senses, the mind dimmed, the senses alert and hungry for the consummation of colour and sound and form. The consummation came in the scene about the fire. I lay back, indescribably afraid and exalted.

Again there was a stirring in the black pit of the stepway. An Arab woman appeared. A monstrous harridan, in child. She wanted to dance for us, but we pressed three triangles of cheese into her dirty hands, we gave her a tin of sardines and sent her about her business. Then came an old Arab man. He leaned upon his stick, within the pink tide from the fire, and told us that he was the oldest man in the valley of Petra. We nourished him and he sat back, beside the goatherd. The boy raised his flute and played again, and from croaky depths, with a voice which quivered and rattled with uncertainty, the old man sang to the flute. A long, miserable note. Then a quivering of little notes, scampering one at the heels of the other, then the long miserable note again. I lay back, flat upon my back, and watched the pattern of the stars. One detached itself and hurtled down, to join the sun in the valley on the other side of the mountain. The goatherd paused. I sat up and asked the old man to tell us a

story, and, sentence by sentence, through the interpreter, I heard the tale of his life in the valley.

"My name is Ibrahim. My father's name was Ibrahim and he hunted in the desert, south of Amman. We came to Petra when I was a boy, with my brothers Yousuf and Ahmed. Our mother died upon the way. White foam came out of her mouth. We were sad when we came here, and for many days we sat in the cave which we found, mourning our mother. When my brother Yousuf was fourteen years, my brother Ahmed was twelve years and I was eleven years. All day we went into the pastures with the goats or we dug in the caves, to find carved stones and pots and coins, which other men had left there. Then my father died and we found him cold, when we came back one day from the pasture. We made a grave for him and then my brother Yousuf became our father. Yousuf was the eldest. Some days he went with the goats and left Ahmed and myself to play in the cave. One day, when Ahmed and I were alone, we waited for our brother when it was dark, and all night, until it was morning. But he did not come. My brother Ahmed went to the pasture to find him. And there were the goats, feeding upon the grass, and my brother Yousuf was sleeping upon a big stone, beside an oleander bush. My brother Ahmed loved Yousuf. They always walked with their hands locked together. So he did not wake him, but he lay down beside him and slept.

"My brother Yousuf was not asleep. He was

dead, for a snake which slept beneath the oleander bush had crawled out and killed him. My brother Ahmed did not know this and he slept beside my dead brother. I waited through the day and through the night for them, but they did not come. I went out and I found them, and both were dead and cold beside the oleander bush. The snake had crept out and killed my brother Ahmed also. I found the snake beneath the oleander bush and I slew him. Then I carried my brothers to our cave and I buried them. Then I led the goats home from the pasture and I was alone."

Nobody moved or spoke when the old man ended his story. For ten minutes, perhaps, we all lay there, the Arabs about the fire, L. curled up on her rug, the Air Force officer and myself a little withdrawn, against the rock. The goatherd took up his flute again and he played, and soon the old man joined him and sang. I remember little more, for I slept. The fire died down to a stiff network of glowing red sticks. The Arabs slept and the darkness pressed down upon us.

I woke half way through the night : not to wade through the sluggish twenty minutes of confused thought with which I usually approach consciousness. I was suddenly awake and alert, lying back upon my bed, looking up to the sky and smelling the lively air of the night. I glowed with a sweet sensation of happiness. Nothing in my existence vexed me. It was as if the beauty of the day had been assimilated into myself : it had become my

nerves and my blood. I have seldom known such peace of mind and spirit, except when I have bathed in the open sea. Then one feels the tide and the colour and the distance to be part of one's self, and one's self part of them.

My bed was a few yards from the edge of the stone parapet. I leaned up and looked out into the dim space. If I had walked in my sleep, I might have tumbled down, hundreds of feet into the valley, to be smashed : to stain and befoul the oleanders. F. lay in the bed next to mine. The moonlight was so violent that I could see the outline of his face against the pillow, and his tousled, black hair. I slipped out of the bed and, drawing my dressing-gown over my shoulders, I walked to the edge of the rock. I was alone in the world. F. was asleep. L. was asleep in her cave and the Arab guard was lying pell mell about the tumbled, dying fire. My eyes became used to the moonlight and, as I looked out into the valley, I was able to penetrate the shadows and to distinguish shapes. Two steps from where I stood and I could have flown into the space, had I been an eagle, to enjoy the sensation of passing quickly through the air, up and down, feeling the cool night stroking my body, dipping down into the shadows, soaring up towards the burning, topaz moon. I stretched my arms and my mind fell upon the cliché, "It is good to be alive." To be able to see, to be able to smell the world and to touch beautiful shapes. To be excited by colour and pacified by form.

I remembered the English boy I had met in Jerusalem. When he came to me to confess his religious doubts and his spiritual despair because the clergyman photographed the olive trees in Gethsemane, he had said, "It would be terrible to die now, with all these doubts in my mind." Then he had added, "I would be afraid." I remembered too that I had been shocked and amazed when he said this. He truly thought of God as a rather unpleasant old man, waiting around a corner to pounce upon him and fry him eternally. His religion grew out of fear of death, not out of a realisation of life. Even in the first, sluggish years of my Nonconformist education in New Zealand, I never knew this fear. Surely death is the final and amazing privilege, the letting you into the divine secret which has perplexed you for so long. The final betrothal between one's self and the beauty for which one has sought fugitively, but never hopelessly. Even if the cynics are right: even if it is only that one's dust is to blow among the oleanders or to succour grain in a field. To be afraid of death is an insult to God and to his plan for our ultimate accession, whatever form that accession might assume. The wretched boy in Jerusalem was afraid that an omnibus might knock him down and kill him, just at the moment when he chanced to be saying to himself, "The Virgin's Tomb is a fake." He believed that, with this thought staining his dying brain, he would be hurled into the great fire. The physical sensations of death may be frightening, if one is a physical



coward. As a child, my nights were tortured by the fear of being buried alive. I could not sleep and my father used to hold me, as I sobbed and beseeched him, promising to bury me with a big pipe leading down from the surface of the earth, into my coffin. There was to be a bell at the top and, running through the pipe, a cord which was to be tied to my hand. Somebody was to wait, for many days after my burial, in case I rang the bell. This horror made the night menacing to me. But I had no fear of being hurled to hell, perhaps because I was early freed from the indecency of possessing a conscience. Of all the claptrap of the moralists, none is more nauseating than the appeal of conscience : the insistence upon the importance of acts and the subjection and confusion of the deeper importance of motives. In criminal law only it is inevitable that acts should be the basis of judgment and punishment. But what is a fact is very often fundamentally untrue. In spiritual law, acts are as unimportant to the final prosperity of a man's soul as is the one withered peach to the full crop of fruit, the healthy tree and its vigorous roots.

The English boy in Jerusalem was certain, when he spoke to me, that he had felt a " call " to be a priest. But I do not believe that he has ever stood face to face with God. His call may have been to the priesthood, the priesthood acting as an agent between himself and the stark magnificence of the Divine Being. He was obsessed by agents between himself and God. Laws of social behaviour, the



URN TEMPLE, PETRA



interpretation of the Scriptures by other men, tradition, respectability. The last is a great power with him in selecting the flowers for his spiritual garden. He had never exposed his soul to God : God present in all beauty, in all laughter, in all the slow process of making character. He had said, " I do not feel anything in these Churches." I had answered, " Then stay away from them and spend your Easter Sunday tramping out in the hills . . . God won't be vexed. But he had gone to his churches, afraid of the adventure of selection and growth, through his own instincts. Every few minutes, he interrupted me with a text from the Scriptures. He used them with the same dexterity and with as much feeling as a clerk in a post office, using a rubber stamp.

I too failed to find God in the Jerusalem Churches, unless it was in the architectural forms or in the colour of the beautiful columns at Bethlehem. So I came here, without any fear of brimstone raining upon me as I crossed the desert. In this pagan valley, one could become part of the great beauty of creation. This surely *is* the way to the end. By discovering " the origin and journey of the soul," by doing nothing mean, by making Hillel's teaching the light of our day, by doing nothing to our neighbour we would not have him do unto us. By being strong and hard fisted in judging one's self and lenient in acquitting one's neighbour. By not being sentimental in either of these judgments. By throwing one's self into the personal battle of character,

with a will of iron. By accepting suffering as a privilege and yet guarding one's self from fanaticism and self-pity. As I stood on the edge of the red stone parapet, I should have liked to shake the English boy until his teeth rattled. His disease was self-pity. He will no doubt go to Heaven . . . his own dull suburb of Heaven. He will tug anæmic music out of his harp strings. But how God will yawn when he is obliged to ask the young man to luncheon !

I moved up the ledge of rock until I could look down upon the circle of Arabs and the crestfallen fire. I took my cigarettes from my pocket, but there were no matches. One of the Arab soldiers stirred. He must have been watching me all the time for he took a brand from the nest of red sticks and brought it to me. I lit my cigarette and then I threw the sparkling stick out into the darkness. The Arab stood next to me. I had given him a cigarette and he smoked it slowly, as if a century were not too much time to devote to it. We stood there for perhaps an hour, watching the movements of light and shadow as morning came. Soon it was light enough for me to see where I stood. I had walked too far : the ledge was so narrow that two more steps would have sent me falling, down to the oleanders. Perceiving my surprise and my giddiness, the Arab took my hand and lead me back to my bed as if I had been a child.

XIII

JERUSALEM

*May*

I CAME back here yesterday. I crossed the weary desert alone, at the end. Sometimes I stopped the car and slept in the sand, in the shelter of a spiky, thirsty bush. Once, as we passed a Bedouin tent, a child, a girl of perhaps fourteen years, came to us with a pitcher in her hand. We stopped the car and looked in her pitcher, which was full of goat's milk. She wished us to take it, as a present. I have never seen a more beautiful child. She moved like a gazelle. Her eyes were ridiculously big and they were deep red-brown, like tortoiseshell. Her nose was trembling, delicate, and the little hands which held the pitcher were gentle and slim. It was not merely human beauty. Some mystery was sleeping in her eyes. Some calm, some knowledge. I felt my nerves, or some network of consciousness in me, draw tight and suffuse my body. It was not because she was a being, nor because she was a girl. It was something of the sensation pagan people must have felt in contemplating a priestess. Or a cenobite, raising his eyes to see a celestial visitation lightening his cell. Her eyes never moved. While the Arab driver spoke to her, she looked at me. A long, unphysical, all-knowing stare.

We left her in the desert. I looked out of the window of the car and saw her, turned a little, to follow us with her eyes. She stood upon the sand, the one radiant flower in the parched nothingness, the most beautiful of all creatures. Her body had been almost naked, but no man would have dared to touch it. She had a string of white beads about her throat. They lay like globules of cream upon the soft brown velvet of her skin.

Jerusalem had not changed. The Zionists were waiting for me in the hotel. Eighteen pamphlets were sitting on my writing-table. I was drawn back from my dream into the noises and concerns, the rattle and muddle of the morning. The light still moved in multiplying, changing patterns along the city wall. Down past the stinking bedlam of the bazaars, the Jews still stroked the blessed stones of the Wailing Wall. The visitors still clicked their cameras at the olive-trees in the Garden of Gethsemane. There were letters from England. Reviews of my new book, good news, but all annoying voices that did not seem to reach my ears. I went down to the bazaar to buy a gramophone record of the goatherd's flute song. It was my last, pathetic attempt to take some vestige of Petra's beauty back with me to England. But it was not the same. The goatherd had dropped only the ghost of his notes upon the wax. He was himself herding the goats in the field beside Galilee. Or he was threading his way home, through the thick black night, in the red stone valley. So I left the gramophone records in

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the drawer of the hotel bedroom and I came away alone.

### *The Pearl*

It is significant that the cause of man's downfall was called the Tree of Knowledge. It seems to me that our damnation began with the birth of our intelligence. During the time I have been in Palestine, I have read eleven books upon Judaism . . . they have been pressed into my hand with earnest wishes that I should try to comprehend the truth about the Jews. And I have read three books upon the Moslems. I have talked to the sheik in charge of the Mosque of Omar, a charming, scholarly old man with a delicious sense of humour. I have gathered scholars of both camps about me and, with their aid, I have tried to force my way back through the history of Moslem and Jew, through a labyrinth of intellectual laws and theories. This morning, tired after my journey back from Petra, I lay in bed in Jerusalem and languished in the days of Herod. In his glorious time, life in Jerusalem was more spacious and men were more simple than they are now. There was no spick and span university upon the hill to inflict Knowledge, and her half-sister, Discontent, upon the people. Lying in my bed, seeing nothing but a stretch of the wall of the old city from my window, I read my book and enjoyed a scene somewhere about a hundred years before the destruction of the Temple.

The two great Hebrew teachers of the time,



each canvassing the obedience of the people, were Hillel and Shammai. Shammai was austere and terrible in imposing laws of behaviour. He might have been a nineteenth-century Nonconformist. He denied his followers even the right to eat an egg which had been laid upon a feast day. The Jews very wisely shunned the sanctimonious crank : they turned from his strictness and embraced the law of Hillel. Hillel was more lenient, for his wisdom had been gathered from experience of life.

He had come as a young man from Babylon. Arriving in Jerusalem, the one shrine he sought was the company of the wise men. He climbed to the roof of the Temple, pressing his ears against a hole to hear the Law being discussed by the wise men inside. He had stayed there, the snow falling upon his back, until he was frozen against the roof. The wise men found the young Babylonian there, and took him into the Temple. He confessed his passion for knowledge to them. They succoured him and taught him and in the end, when he had gained all knowledge, he became Doctor of the Law in Jerusalem.

From him sprang the secret of virtuous living among the Jews. One day a proselyte came to him, unhappy in his ignorance. Hillel consoled him. "I will teach you *all* the Law while you stand on one foot," he said. "What is hateful to thee do not unto thy fellow-man : this is the whole Law. The rest is mere commentary." If only the Jews could rest content with this one sentence, and

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not multiply and confuse it with a thousand books of commentary, they would be a much happier people.

With his ears pressed against the roof of the Temple, through the long years of study, through the weariness of life and the friendship of all the wise men of his time, this was all Hillel learned and this was all he had to teach.

His pearl of truth was handed on. Herod died, and history changed the face of Jerusalem. It addled men's minds and set them off, stampeding in this direction and that, with new intellectual theories. Hillel too had died, and the pearl of truth fell from his withered hands into the fresh rounded palm of his grandson Gamaliel. Gamaliel guarded it from the bustle and jostling about him and, when he became the teacher of St. Paul, he handed the pearl on to him.

Its beauty became a blessing to every man who saw it. Jesus, stirring to consciousness in Nazareth, opened His young hand and found the pearl lying in His palm. He left Nazareth with it in His hand and He walked towards the calm shores of Galilee. He paused beside the water and told the people of the pearl. He made only this change in its setting. Hillel had said that to love one's neighbour as oneself was the first law. Jesus told His wide-eyed listeners that it was the second law. The first law, he said, was that they should love God. Their neighbour second. Perhaps my goatherd paused on the fringe of the multitude, his reed flute silent in his hand.

Perhaps, when he went away from the crowd that had gathered about the Nazarene, his song changed. The goats listened to a new and more enchanting song.

So it was that both Christians and Jews enjoyed the inspiration of the pearl of truth. The Christians adopted it. They very often had it reset, to please the fashions of the time. Calvin and Luther. Many jewellers reset it according to their own design. But they could not injure the pearl itself. Its immaculate purity and beauty remained, untouched and unchanged.

The good Jews, too, turned the pearl over in their hands. It shone. It was Hillel's heirloom, to help them through two centuries of torture.

In the same spirit, but in different phrases, the law of living was also given to the Moslems. We started in the race more or less even.

Later in the day, I went out and down to the old city. On the way, I thought of this pearl which had been given, equally, to the three forces which rage such bloody war in Jerusalem now. On the whole, we seem to have spent the two thousand years in trying to unlearn the one simple truth which was taught to us. As I elbowed my way down the crowded bazaar, I recalled the simple phrase of Hillel and I became suddenly miserable about the whole state of Palestine. To moan about the state of human nature is not a helpful pastime, and it can smell of arrogance and priggishness. But, considering that man has possessed the secret of love for

his neighbours for two thousand years or more, it seems more than a pity that he is still only at the beginning of appreciating it.

I came to the Wailing Wall, past the stinking corner which I always negotiate with the help of a lemon or a little bunch of carnations. The inevitable border of swaying human beings was there. They pressed their lips against the stone, they mumbled and they swayed. Picturesque! Yes, you can stand at one end and click your camera very quickly, and catch the Wall and half a dozen praying Jews, and you can paste them into an album. You can write beneath it, "The Wailing Wall." It is one with the Taj Mahal and Niagara Falls and the pigeons fluttering upon the square outside St. Mark's. But it is nevertheless the shocking and morbid manifestation of a depressed people. "I have never been there in my life," said the powerful Jew with the walnut lines upon his face, whom I met beside Galilee. "I should like to blow it up," said Alfred Mond, when he first saw it. I wonder how far the Jews might have escaped from their own depression if they had turned away from wailing and from abstract religion to a religion of action and expression, of relationship with their neighbour? How far has their own deeply intellectual religion estranged them from human sympathy? How far is it fundamentally wrong to kiss the stones of the past like this? To press one's body against an ancient stone, to force one's very essence past the wall into the centuries behind it? Is there some

terrible significance in God's arrangement of the decay of the world? The taking away of the past, the destroying of what man has made. Is it not possible that the future is ours, and not the past? Is there some sin in thus embracing what is dead, whereas there is the future for us to embrace? This guarding of dead things, this erecting of memorials, this dust worship. This eternal awe for what our fathers have done, and this sinister neglect of what we might do ourselves. By what right do we claim the past—we to whom the future is given? Is it that we are afraid of the uncertainty of living our own lives, and that we cling to the certainty of the dead?

“ . . . like a fungus, living on the remains of bygone life, suckling his life out of the dead leaves of greater life than his own.”

When violently unhappy people express themselves, the primitive instinct is to destroy something old. Cromwell may have injured the æsthetic beauty of England, when he smashed the stained glass windows in its cathedrals. The Irish may have offended beauty by burning down a castle of the time of King John. But the worship of inanimate, beautiful things is a comfortable and decadent occupation for man. Perhaps I am wrong to hate Tel Aviv and to love Venice. Venice contributes nothing to the progress of man. It is a comfortable place. It satisfies the eye and it serves the senses.



THE WAILING WALL



## JERUSALEM

It gives you the illusion of escape from the tiresome business of living, the incessant, grinding process of making one's life into some sort of shape. And the instinct which makes an Englishman cling to his monuments is not so very far from the instinct which makes the Jew press his lips against the Wailing Wall, like a lover, seducing the past.

As I stood beside the Wailing Wall, a blind Moslem came out upon a stone prominence overhead. He called the Moslems to prayer in a sing-song voice. As I watched him, a British policeman stalked past. His shoulders and his walk belonged to the parade-ground of Wellington Barracks. His eyes were trained to impassivity, his body glowed with good health. He didn't care a fig for intellectual theories. He might have been Britannia's sandwichman, bearing the sign, "England expects every man to do his duty."

I liked the sight of him. It pleased me, in this conglomeration of swaying Jews. He turned back again and I stopped him. He told me that the Moslem who was calling the people to prayer "was a good fellow." The policeman jerked his hand over his shoulder. "I often have tea and cakes with him. He's blind. He calls them to prayer every day like that. But he's a very good fellow."

Then he walked off again, broad-shouldered and proud. A few minutes afterwards, an old Jew came along and joined the worshippers. He wore a long, faded purple velvet cloak. He must have been a man of authority, for he led the others in prayer.



He swayed and mumbled and, every now and then, he lifted his bony hand from the folds of his purple cloak and touched the wall. The British policeman came back again, his sub-fusc khaki incongruous against the line of black robes and purple. "Does the Jew come every day, too, to pray?" I asked. "Oh, yes, most days he comes. A queer old bird. But he's a great friend of mine. He's a good fellow, you know, but queer."

Without shame, I enjoyed a glow of insular pride. This single-minded English youth, coming, perhaps, from a village tucked away in the Cotswolds, uncritical, unabashed before this conglomeration of centuries and tradition, accepting two vastly different people, entirely upon the basis of their human nature. Both "good fellows." Hillel's teaching, "What is hateful unto thee do not unto thy fellow-man," flowering in a Cotswold lane, too strong and simple to be disturbed by this terrible and ancient conflict of the faiths.

I walked away from the Wailing Wall, up the bazaar, towards the Jaffa Gate. Without any shame, I wallowed in my pride. I was thrilled to be able to claim my name and my blood.

XIV

IN JOACHIM'S HOUSE

*February 1933*

ALMOST a year has passed since I wrote this diary of my journey to Palestine. Now I am going back there again, to walk beside Galilee. When I returned to England last year, I put my diary away, intending never to publish it. I wrote it for myself and it seemed so personal that I did not wish to see it in print. A writer may pour his whole wretched or exalted self into a novel and feel that his secret is safe. The novelist may put his opinions into the mouths of others and describe his sensations so that he seems to the reader to be merely the reporter of those sensations. There can be no subterfuge about a diary. It may be an exposure of bad manners : not because it is written, but because it is published. In a moment of impudence or of high moral courage (I do not know which), I sent my diary to my publisher. The next stepping-stone in its progress has shown itself this evening. The proofs have reached me in this isolated Castle in Oberhessen, and I am faced with my own story, in galley proofs.

It is curious to read the diary now for it no longer belongs to me. Here, where neither newspapers nor letters bring me any ghosts of my ordinary life, I can read my own story with rare detachment. And now I am on my way back to Palestine. Why, I do not

know. I have never been to the same country twice in my life before. Canada, Australia, Africa : I have been able to see them, enjoy them, and then close them out of my life. But Palestine has drawn me back with curious insistence. I am incomplete until I come to know it better. So I shall find myself once more drawn into the wrangle of Christian, Moslem and Jew : the propaganda, the strained anxiety and the energetic battle.

My German friend with whom I am staying lives upon land which has belonged to his family since the tenth century. The forests and farms of his family cover sixty thousand acres, and the villages scattered over his land have escaped many of the curious changes of modern Germany. A crier still rings his bell in the village streets : he shouts the news of the outside world from cottage to cottage. The costumes of four hundred years ago are worn in some of the villages. The faces of the peasants are calm and stupid, from intermarriage and isolation. There is docility and affection in the way they turn to my friend as the head of a family : as Scotsmen turned to their lairds, before the corruption of English society crept over the border.

Three days ago, an old servant fell dead in the farmyard. She had served the family for almost fifty years : in her last years she had hobbled about upon two sticks. She was a peasant and her face was so lovely from the spirit which burned within her, that I used to watch her in wonder as she sat over her knitting. One traced the lines and features

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of her face and found in them the satisfaction of a Holbein drawing. I wanted to touch her face, gently, with my fingers, to be certain that such beauty could grow out of the battle of a human life. She used to nurse my friend when he was a child. She saw him grow from his swaddling clothes to his inheritance. She saw the family change from the old magnificence to the stringencies and cares which have followed the revolution. Her fingers were for ever busy knitting for him and mending for him. Her spirit thrived upon her service to people : everybody loved her. It was pleasant to go with my friend to the kitchen, to see him kiss her upon her cheek and then cajole her into making some wonderful drink. She could perform a magic trick with beer and eggs and other ingredients and produce a drink which was exciting.

When she died, they found a box in which she had kept every scrap of writing from my friend ; every postcard, every note treasured and cared for. She just fell forward upon her face in the farmyard, as she was walking back from coffee and gossip with the farmer's wife. Her heart had failed. They found her, cold and dead, upon the frozen ground.

Yesterday, the peasants trudged up over the white ground, for the funeral service in the drawing-room downstairs. There are no flowers, for it is winter and the country is stark and white. The peasants had made evergreen wreaths, gay with paper blossoms. I saw woman after woman, misshapen in their big black skirts and black shawls, coming

up over the snow. After the service they went to the village and stood around the coffin which had been taken to her brother's cottage. It stood outside, upon a table, for the rooms were too few and too small for both corpse and mourners.

When I live thus with my friend, sharing the domestic pleasures and sorrows of his house, sliding upon the frozen pond, avoiding the treacherous corners of thin ice by the overhanging clump of sombre pine-trees : when I go with him to the little inns, where we eat black bread and sausage and drink beer with the old soldiers, I feel remote from England and from every personal concern of my life. Thus it is that I am able to read this diary of Palestine and see it as the diary of somebody else.

Not so far from where I am living there is a village. "The little Jew cowman" is one of its characters. I am told that, in a moment of passionate resentment, the Nazis once debagged him and painted the Swastika upon his wretched behind. "In *two* colours," insisted the man who told me. But this was in a moment of tempestuous and unreasonable anger. In the main, the little Jewish cowman is allowed to live in peace. This afternoon, the Jew came up from the town, to buy a cow. I went down with my friend to the farmer's room, to talk with him. He was not old : round about fifty, a shrewd, small man, with good eyes. There was great laughter because one of the farm boys had stealthily put a pig's tail into the Jew's pocket : another had drawn Hitler's symbol upon his hat,

when he was not looking. But two thousand years of aggression have made the little man's skin fairly invulnerable. He laughed and took it all in good part. His family has lived in Oberhessen for many years. There are a few Jews in each of these villages, living in social estrangement among the peasants and yet never choosing to go away. The resentment of the peasants has mellowed, the Jew told me. The children no longer cry out "Jew" to him in the street. The farmer sat down with him, while he drank his tea and ate his bread and butter. Once the poor wretch was reprimanded for sprawling across the table and not eating with enough delicacy before the English visitor. He sat up like a scolded child and drank his tea with more care.

I sat down next to him and made him talk. He said that he was happy in Oberhessen. His eyes had sparks of laughter in them and he poured out long answers to my questions. He was a perfect representative of the class of Jew I had met in Palestine : he was the raw material from which the Zionists are made. But the vision of emancipation has not touched him yet. I told him about Palestine. I spoke kindly, as I wished to do, of the farms of Sharon and Jezreel. But he seemed to be unstirred. After twenty minutes, we went into the farmyard to see the cow being weighed.

A transformation came upon the Jew. He pushed his face against the clock dial which showed the weight of the cow. He jumped like a cat upon hot bricks when the calculations began. He made his

first offer. The farmer said "No." Then the farmer made his suggestion, with a difference of forty marks. The Jew leapt in the air. He ran to his bicycle and said, "No, I go away."

He came back. His face was that of an older man for the fever of bargaining was upon him. He advanced the price by five marks. The farmer was adamant. The Jew jumped again and ran back to his bicycle. He returned. This time tears were running down his cheeks. It might have been his soul that was being weighed and valued. His little, screwed-up face turned upon his neck as if in pain. He brushed the tears from his cheeks. Then he advanced another five marks. Again he was spurned and again he ran to his bicycle and said he would go home without the cow. At last the farmer climbed down ten marks and they shook hands, in agreement. The Jew smiled again. The lines of pain vanished from his face and the earlier sparks of humour came back to his eyes. He emerged from his bargaining as if he were recovering from a spell.

Cold winds blew up from the valley and I turned with my friend, to go back into the house. As we came to the door, the Jew ran after us with a parcel. He had brought some matzen for my friend. As he handed the parcel to him, he told us that his wife and himself had enjoyed the Christmas turkey which my friend had given them very much indeed.

I shook hands with him and said that I hoped he would follow me to Palestine and join the great army of Zionists. He screwed up his comic little

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face again and said that he would never do that.

Then I felt the cloak of the Jerusalem propagandist falling upon my shoulders. I almost resented this cold dismissal of the call of Zion. I painted a picture of the Promised Land, restored to the Jews. Again the crinkled face smiled and then the husky voice said, "No, I could not live there. If it is all Jews, there wouldn't be any Christians to do business with."

So we all laughed and shook hands again and my friend and I went into the house. It was then that the proofs of my book were waiting for me. I took them upstairs to my room and read through the story of my battle in Palestine. All the time I was haunted by the figure of the little Jew in the farmyard and of his heritage of suffering.

From all the pain England has suffered for her arrogant certainty before the war, the policeman comes from his Cotswold village to guard the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem and to realise the qualities of human nature in both Moslem and Jew. From the pain Germany has suffered as punishment for Prussia's arrogance, and in spite of Adolph Hitler's cruel hatred of the Jews, my friend finds it possible to eat the Jew's matzen in his Castle and the little Jew enjoys my friend's Christmas turkey in his cottage. One hundred years ago this would have been impossible. Surely even here, as much as in Jerusalem with its old angers or in Geneva, with its intellectual theories of world government, Hillel's words begin to flower. "What is hateful unto thee do not unto thy fellowman." We learn slowly, but with certainty.





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